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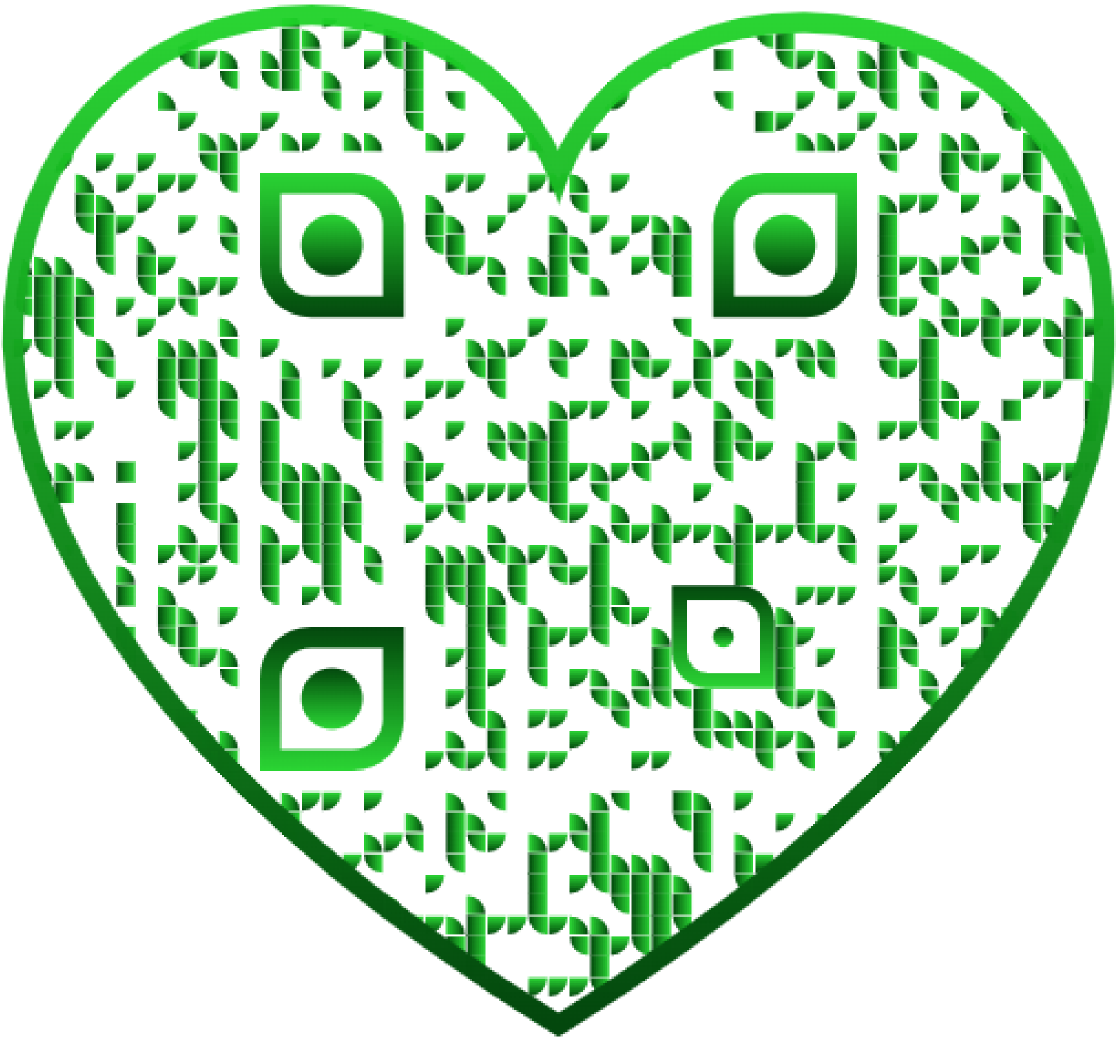

Ana Popovic

Dance To The Rhythm

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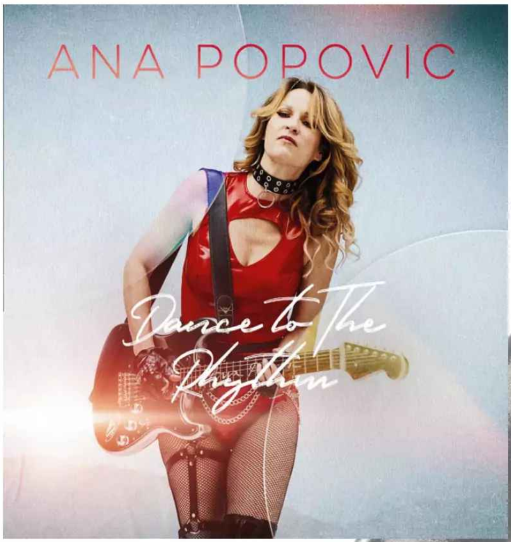

Ana Popovic and 'Electric Heel Records' are thrilled to announce the release of Ana's 13th studio album "Dance To The Rhythm" that blends searing blues style with elements of rock, R&B, soul and funk to create a unique sound that is intriguing and powerful, unpredictable and new but unmistakably her very own.

For Ana Popovic, the operative word is "empowerment." . Popovic's focus is dialed in on life, love, and, of course, loads of sinfully toned guitar via her beloved Fender Strat. Dance to the Rhythm is a mission statement for the masses, alerting her faithful fans that the six-stringer is back—with a bullet.

The record, which merges the soulful bliss of '70s funk and R&B with Popovic's rare brand of fearless modern blues, is a barnburner.

But Dance to the Rhythm has its sultry, late-night chill-out moments, like the blues track "Dwell on the Feeling," which merges Popovic's torrid guitar licks with her sweet-toned, idiosyncratic, yet commanding vocals.

Popovic remains an inventive modern-day maestro. Listen to the unbridled energy and subtle nuances throughout 'Dance to the Rhythm,' and enjoy an eye-opening, ear-expanding experience. Take the journey.

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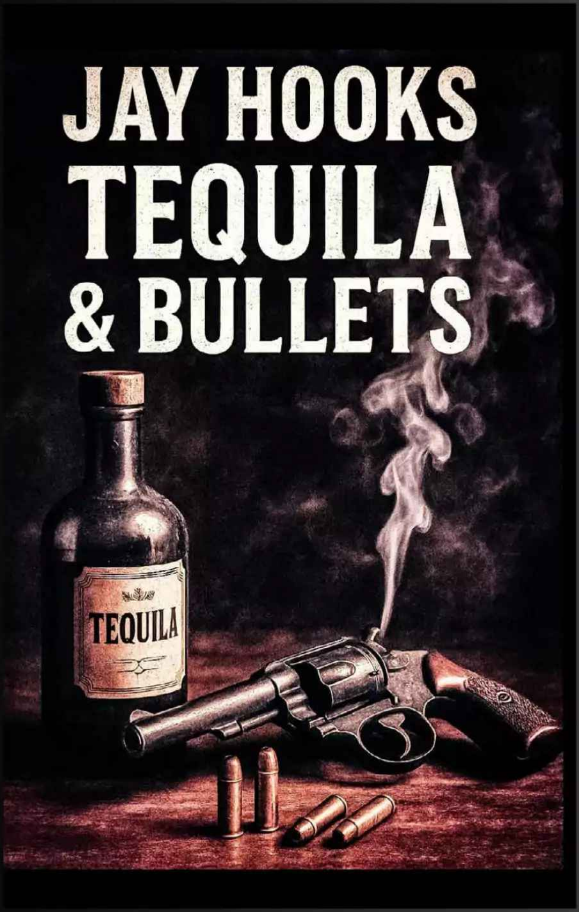

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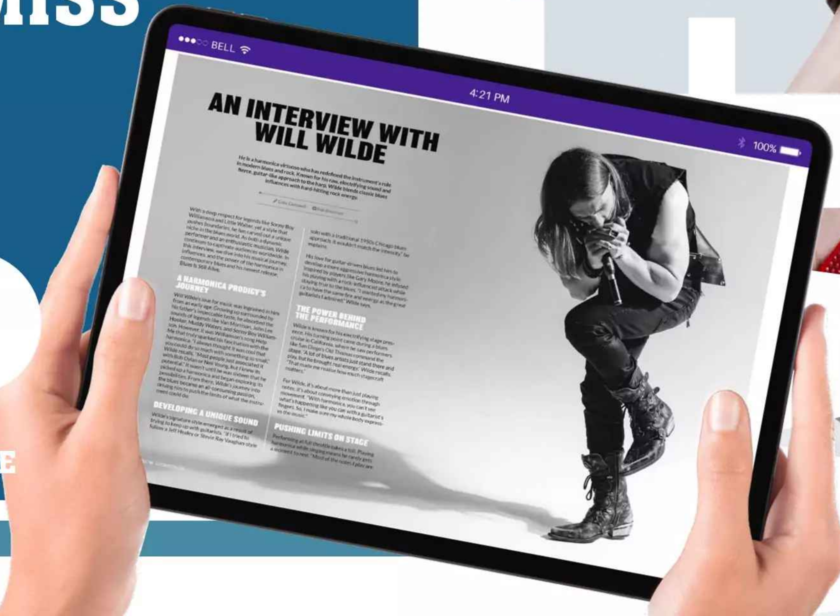
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Gibson

S.E.R.P.E.N.T.

Better call Saul wasn't quite the message that I received from his management people. It was even better than that as Saul Hudson, aka the artist known as Slash, called me as I zoomed in for a chinwag with the legendary Guns N' Roses guitar-slinger.

Paul Davies Gene Kirkland

Holed up in his Mexico City hotel suite, where he was due to play the final date on this relentless hard rock band's American tour, he was affably eager to passionately discuss the blues and its pervasive influence throughout his musical lifetime with Blues Matters Magazine.

Turning back time, Slash's love of the blues came from a significant and major influence in his life: his grandma. "When I first picked up the guitar, I started with all the British rock guitar players who were my biggest influence," he recalls. "And then my grandmother, who is a musician and played piano, turned me on to the blues. She wanted me to hear the origins of all this stuff that I was listening to as an eager fourteen-year-old. She's the one that turned me on to BB King and that was a huge eureka moment, because then I started getting into all the different sorts of blues guitar players that I could come across. Albert King was a big one, and Freddie, all the King guys," he enthuses. "I really liked Buddy Guy, and so that was an important part of my guitar learning experience," he affirms.

Slash's current release, Live From The Serpent Festival, is a blistering collection of well-loved blues tunes with an all-star cast of players taking a walk on part as he tells me: "Some of these songs are on Orgy Of The Damned (Slash's recent blues studio album release) and I always have a disclaimer as we picked a lot of songs that have almost been done to death that it's almost corny in a way, because they've been done so much." Nevertheless, he qualifies his reasons for choosing and playing these cherished blues standards: "They are very important songs that I learned how to play when I was 14 and 15 years old, and that's why I wanted to do them." He furthers: "When the Blues Ball first started out in the 90s, it was just a jam band. When you're in a club, you can play those very well worn, sort of blues hits, and the crowd loves it. But when you put it on a record, it's like Born Under A Bad Sign, again? But that riff was such an integral part of my guitar playing style that I feel like I would be doing an injustice if I didn't record it. So that's sort of how all these songs came to pass on this record."

The album retains a live recording vibe with a collegiate spirit of maximum respect between all players as Slash details: "We had all these great artists just hanging out and jamming every day. And it was really sort of like a glorified club gig and it was just such a different experience from what I normally do, as far as the crowd is concerned, and the overall atmosphere. I really, really had a great time. So, there you go," he proudly states. Why was Denver chosen as the tour date to record: "This was one show that we recorded. We planned it ahead of time and knew that we were going to record something and I wanted to do something at the midway point, so it wasn't right at the beginning, and it wasn't right at the end. So, the venue in Denver is great and that was the reason why we chose to do it there, he reveals. "Also, it's a great crowd there and we just recorded that one show. We didn't do much to fix it. It's just a raw board tape and we put a little mixing into it. And that was about it." Thus, proving the point that there is nothing more genuine and authentic as the blues in all its raw power and glory. I suggest that playing the blues gives Slash a freedom to roam and improvise: "Basically, I've got these songs that I have lived with and I love and, I'm trying to think of the right way to put it, you keep the song, the melody, the basic hook, which in blues is usually one or two things within a song, and some words, obviously, and then the rest of it is open to expression on that same theme instrumentally. And that's basically what the live effort is. Just doing that song and that melody and sort of vibe, and then you sort of take-off melodically in an improvisational way, and just keep expressing that feeling until you decide, 'okay, I've said what I have to say'. Then go back to the song and vamp it out". That's a damn fine instructional manual for playing the blues as I also ask him if this provides him more emotional scope to dig deep into the vibe of these songs: "I don't

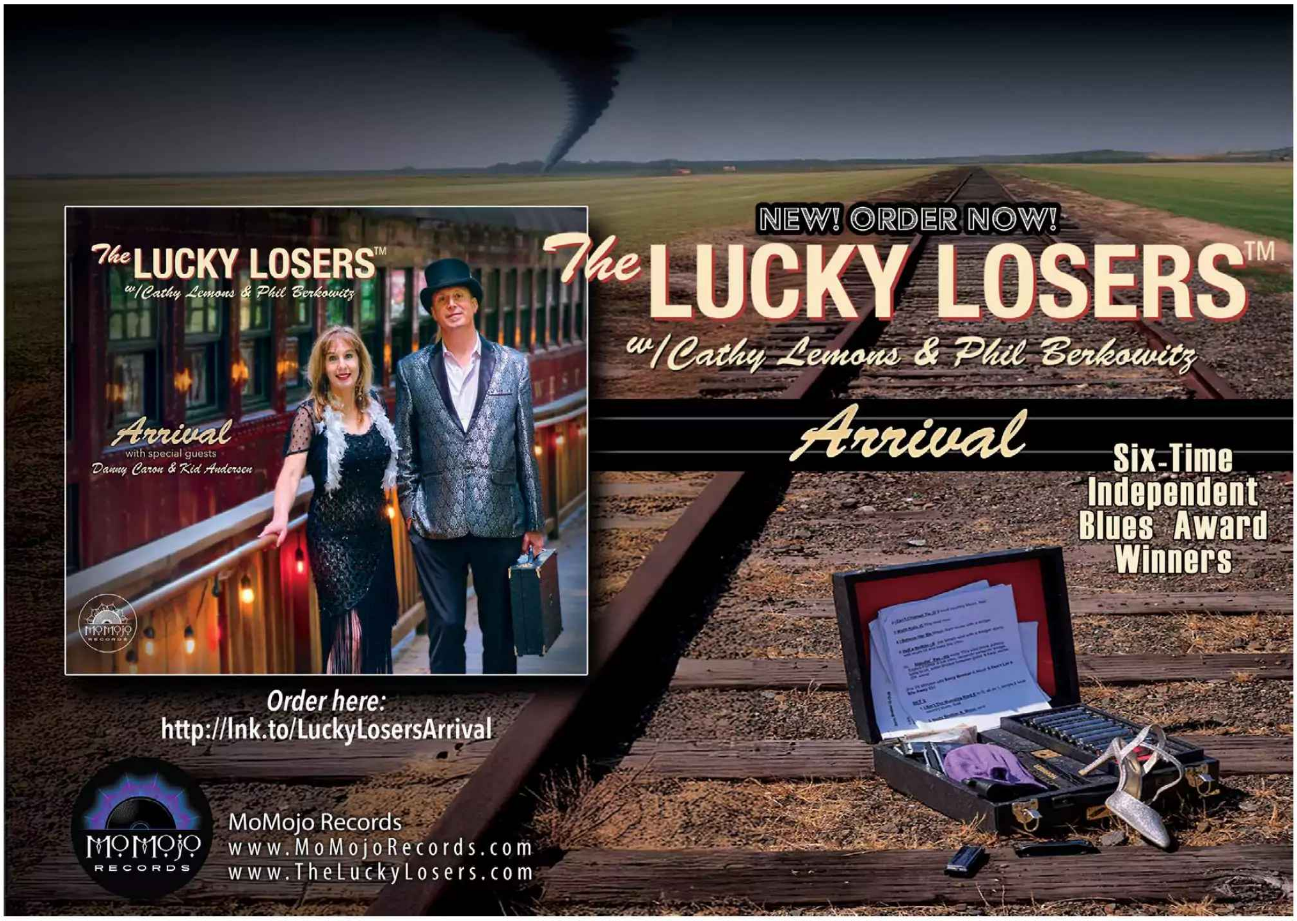
really spend a lot of time analysing it. It's about a groove and a feeling, and then I just sort of take-off on that. This also happens within structured songs as well, but they're more structured, and there's more stuff going on in the arrangement, and there's more things to pay attention to."

He ponders awhile: "This is sort of like, you got the lick, and then you just go off on that. And it's a lot of fun and a different experience than playing an otherwise well-known popular song." He explains further: "I mean, a lot of these are well known popular songs, but they're blues songs, and it's just a different thing than having a well-known radio song with a certain arrangement and certain parameters and all that." I enquire if he has to adapt and change his guitar technique much when playing the blues as opposed to his usual day job of hard rock: "I'm a very much through and through rock and roll guy, and when I learned, say, Hideaway by Freddie King, I would play it a little bit faster and a little bit louder than Freddie King did, just because I was also very much influenced by early Aerosmith, AC/DC and The Stones which were more hard rock. So, when I go in to do a blues track, it's my version of a blues thing. It's not supposed to be like a real blues purist kind of a thing, because that would be inaccurate. I have a feel and a passion for blues stuff. But when I do it, my version of it is usually kicked up a little bit," he asserts.

It's clear and loud as a cow bell that Slash is very proud to be playing these songs and classic riffs and join the Pantheon of legendary blues players who have recorded these near biblical status blues tracks: "I am with this live one. I mean, I was just talking about this with my girlfriend." He pauses, "We just recorded the show and then we mixed it and it took about a couple hours to mix it, and that was a few months ago, and now it's released," he says. "It was just a board tape of one show out of many shows we did and it's cool that it's out there," he says. "But I don't spend too much time dwelling on it. I actually haven't listened to it since I mixed it. So, I'm not really dialled into the dynamic of it being released and what people are thinking of it. But it was cool at the time when we did it."

With Guns N' Roses ongoing live dates including a confirmed headline spot at Download 2026, I wonder if there is any chance of Slash bringing his blues show over to Europe: "I'm definitely trying to figure out when we can do another run and when we can do another record," he reassuringly confirms. "I want to go to Europe with it, and I'd like to go to Asia and South America with it as well. I mean, there's a great audience out there for blues material, and I loved doing this one tour we did. So, I'm just trying to figure out where the window is so I can go out and do it some more. It's definitely coming, I just haven't sorted it out yet."

More the indefatigable workaholic than many of his contemporaries who have also broken bad in their time, Slash's ongoing magnificent resurgence and musical quest to continue to keep the blues alive denotes him as a true music aficionado and revered legend in his own lifetime.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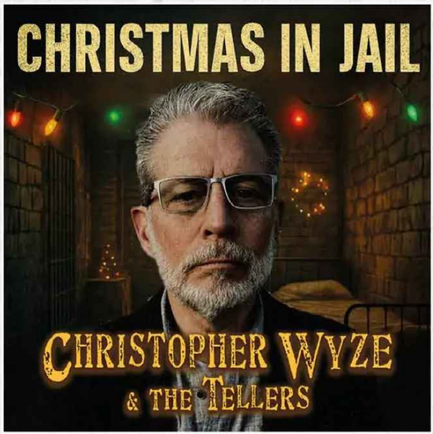
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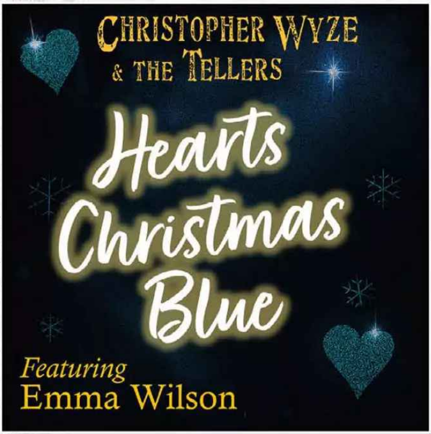
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CRISTIAN BASSO

Calling in from his home in Colorado, to Blues Matters the founder of Babaux and The Peacemakers greets me with a smile in his voice: "Everything's beautiful today. The sun is shining, inspiration in the air." It's a fitting start for a musician whose journey has been guided by both light and legacy.

✎ Colin Campbell 📷 Sean Boggs

Born and raised in rural Virginia, Babaux grew up surrounded by the rich sounds of the Piedmont blues the same earthy, fingerpicked style that influenced generations of early bluesmen. But his mother's influence was just as pivotal. "My mom is a classical pianist and a music promoter, she'd organise concerts in Winchester, Virginia, and these artists would play right in our living room. That's how I first met John Jackson. This current project revisits those roots that stripped-down Piedmont sound."

FROM BASSLINES TO RESONATORS

Before the steel strings and haunting slide tones of his national resonator guitar, Babaux was a sought-after bass player. His early career saw him crisscrossing the U.S., backing a variety of touring acts. "I was playing bass professionally for years, I worked with incredible people like Leo Nocentelli from The Meters, who taught me about songwriting and, most importantly, about listening." Then, he also struck up a friendship with Eric Lindell, sharing one of his original songs that would appear on Lindell's Gulf Coast Highway album on Alligator Records. "That experience really got me thinking seriously about songwriting, but I was always writing on bass. Picking up the resonator before the pandemic completely changed how I wrote, it fitted my voice, my soul. I wanted to exclaim from the inside, not just play. That guitar really opened me up, I've learned so much just by diving into other people's music and finding my own path through it."

SIDEMAN TO THE STARS

"When you're young and hungry, it's all about getting involved," he says. "We'd open for national acts that came through town, and once they saw we could handle it, they'd ask if we wanted to back them up." That attitude led to one of his most memorable experiences, playing bass for Bo Diddley during the legend's 75th birthday tour. "That came about just from being in the right place at the right time, but it taught me so much. When people trust that you'll respect their music and play it with inspiration, doors start to open. Playing with Bo certainly added a little clout. It's tough to get noticed, you just need that foot in the door. Once you prove yourself, you build relationships that grow from local to regional to national and sometimes global."

THE BIRTH OF THE PEACEMAKERS

Babaux and The Peacemakers began taking shape during the isolation of the pandemic. He realised he needed other musicians for the new material and reached out to talented players around Denver who could perform, write and create. The first lineup featured Neek and Alana Velvas as the rhythm section with Eric Martinez on lead guitar. Together they made the debut album Lucky 13, recorded with very little rehearsal. That spontaneity worked, and the record performed well on independent charts.

Their second album, Moments In Time, followed only nine months later and again showcased their shared chemistry. When Neek and Alana later moved to New York, Babaux brought in new Denver musicians for Keep Both Hands On The Wheel. He says the shift has energised the project and pushed the songwriting forward, and he hopes that growth continues.

THE SOUND OF SOMETHING HONEST

"It's rooted in the blues, but there's also a strong roots-

YOUR ARMS REACH TOWARDS ME

rock element. The blues give us our foundation the structure and feel, while the rock side comes from the way we arrange and write. We get DJs from around the world some play just blues, others rock and they all say the same thing; 'It sounds like you guys.' That's the best compliment. It's honest, familiar, but different."

LESSONS FROM THE MASTERS

"You know, I think the best advice comes from people with experience." That experience came early on through the guidance of Leo Nocentelli, legendary guitarist of The Meters, who taught Babaux the importance of listening not just to the music, but to the instrument itself. "He saw that I had an ability to feel my music and inspired me to get the best out of that instrument." But it was a moment with Bo Diddley that really stayed with him. "I was star-struck, sitting in a room with Bo Diddley, all ears, wanting to know the key to his sound," he recalled. "He told me, 'Cristian, if I can tell you one piece of advice, it's to remain true to yourself and be honest. People are smart, they know if you're being pretentious or if you're being honest and true. That's what we try to do as a band, reach deep down, and express what we're truly feeling."

KEEPING THE CHANNELS OPEN

The conversation then turned to songwriting, an area where Babaux's process is as organic as it is inspired. "I wish I knew where songs came from," he laughed. "They just come into my world, and I work hard to keep those channels open." Inspiration can strike anywhere, walking down the street, riding his bike, talking with family, or simply observing nature. "My family is a huge part of my inspiration, a lot of songs start with concepts, love for my wife, for my child, or wondering why someone said something in a certain way. Sometimes it's the wind in the trees or something from a movie that hits home. I play my instrument every day. Sometimes I'm just jamming with some chords, and suddenly a melody fits perfectly with an idea I had earlier. Other times, it all comes together in ten minutes—you get greedy when that happens, thinking you can do it every day!" he laughed. "But even if not every song's great, writing every day keeps your brain in that mode to write better songs."

SONGS FROM THE HEART: BEHIND THE TRACKS

The album Keep Both Hands On The Wheel blends soul, slide guitar and honest storytelling, with each track carrying its own emotional weight. Steal Your Love began as a slower song before being reshaped into something more playful. It became a lighthearted take on his wife teasing him and the joy of chasing her affection.

Wildflower holds deeper symbolism. The idea came from a hike in the Rocky Mountains, where wildflowers grew through land scarred by wildfire. That image became a metaphor for resilience, shaped further by watching his children face a difficult world and continually grow stronger.

Hardly Living began as a raw Delta-style piece built around voice and resonator before the band transformed it into something heavier. It reflects people going through life without truly living and the moment someone decides to reclaim their direction.

> ***"Remaining true to yourself matters most"***

The title track grew out of a major turning point when the original rhythm section moved on. Although that shift was initially painful, the song became a reminder to stay steady and treat the change as a new beginning.

THE HONEST ROAD AHEAD

"With the resonator and The Peacemakers, I feel like I can finally express what I'm trying to feel in an honest way. People can sense that; every bend of the string, every note, every lyric it's all part of being true to yourself and to the music." That theme of perseverance and reinvention runs through the record, music as a vehicle for healing and hope, even in the face of change. "It's about moving forward, finding like-minded people who love the music as much as you do. That's really what it's all about."

CAPTURING THE MOMENT

The album was recorded at Clubhouse Records in Golden, Colorado, owned by Ben Walagoski a man Babaux calls "a talented steel guitar player with a wonderful ear. It was a live recording setup, designed to capture the rhythm section's energy. Eric on guitar, he's got a huge heart and pours everything into what he does. We wanted to catch that feeling, those little spontaneous moments that make the music breathe." Babaux later added some Dobro parts and brought in a few guest musicians. "We introduced a Hammond B3 organ, kind of a nod to my New Orleans funk days," he says. "C.R. Groover played it, he's an incredible musician and a dear friend. He's one of those rare players who not only has talent but a heart of gold, and that's important in this band." Other contributors included steel guitarist Ben Walagoski himself, fiddler Sammy Montoya, and backing vocalist Andrea Ware. "Andrea and I were in a band together years ago, she's got a powerful, soulful voice she really brought Hardly Living to life."

THE RELEASE AND THE ROAD

When asked how it feels to finally have the record out in the world, Babaux laughs. "It's like giving birth, mixed emotions, really. You've lived with these songs for so long. I'd listen to the mixes while hiking in the mountains, literally walking and listening, stepping to the rhythm, giving feedback to the engineers. It's intense. We've got a show at the Oriental Theatre in Denver on November 16th. It's a beautiful, historic venue, and we'll play the record almost in full. We'll have a few guests join us too, it's going to be a celebration."

The band also recently signed with Guitar One Records and a new booking agent for Colorado festivals. "We're already looking at 2026. You've got to plan ahead for good festival spots. In the meantime, we'll play local shows and keep building momentum."

BLUES AS HEALING

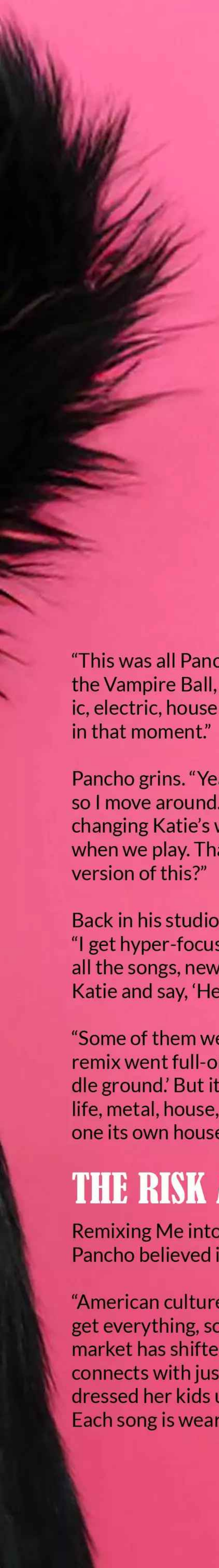
When asked what the blues means to him, Babaux answers without hesitation: "Healing. The blues has always been healing for me. Life isn't easy, there's a lot of noise out there. But blues music helps filter that out, helps you navigate and find peace. Most people have a certain 'blue' in them," he muses. "It's what makes the music so universal. The blues gives us a way to process that and turn it into something beautiful."

KEEPING THE MOMENTUM

The new record has already made waves; hitting number one on the U.S. indie charts. "That's amazing, it means people are listening and connecting. But what's even more important is taking it to the stage. We've built a repertoire that's ready to go. We can do a 45-minute set or a four-hour show. We just want to share the music. "Of course, Babaux is already thinking about what comes next. "I've got about a dozen new songs cooking," he says from his home studio. "They're in different stages, but I record every day. If it feels good, it's worth pursuing. If it doesn't, I dig into why. That's the process."

As for the message behind Keep Both Hands On The Wheel, it's one of strength, reflection, and persistence. "This album reminds me that even when things change, you can adapt, you just keep your hands on the wheel and keep driving forward."

EXPLORE



REMIXING THE BLUES

When blues dynamo Katie Knipp announced that her album Me was being remixed, some fans were surprised. Why would an Americana and blues artist take such a left turn? If Beck had a bluesy, genre-bending sister, it would be Katie Knipp. The answer lies with her bass player and producer, Pancho Tomaselli, a musician obsessed with crossing musical borders.

Colin Campbell Phil Kampel

"This was all Pancho's idea," laughs Katie. "After a gig at the Vampire Ball, we were playing Vampire for this gothic, electric, house crowd, and Pancho just saw something in that moment."

Pancho grins. "Yeah, I'm an immigrant. I jump borders, so I move around. Same with music. I love diversity. Not changing Katie's whole style, just showing what I hear when we play. That night I thought, what if we did a house version of this?"

Back in his studio, he began pulling apart the stems of Me. "I get hyper-focused. Within a week I had skeletons for all the songs, new bass lines, new grooves. I'd send one to Katie and say, 'Here's another one.'"

"Some of them were really out there," Katie laughs. "One remix went full-on heavy metal. I had to say, 'Find a middle ground.' But it was fun. Every track took on its own life, metal, house, drum and bass, trip hop, neo soul, each one its own house of sound."

THE RISK AND THE REWARD

Remixing Me into such eclectic forms was a gamble, but Pancho believed it was worth it.

"American culture loves variety. You walk into Target, you get everything, so why not make an album like that? The market has shifted toward individual songs. If someone connects with just one track, that is fine. It is like Katie dressed her kids up for Halloween and sent them out. Each song is wearing a new costume."

Katie adds, "Our vinyl-collecting friends have been loving the hot pink vinyl edition too. It looks like bubble-gum, people are buying them up."

"There was insecurity," Pancho admits. "Most of Katie's audience is hardcore Americana and blues. I thought they'd either drop out or say, 'Wow, this is cool.' Luckily, most said the latter. Blues stations are even playing the remixes. It is making people more open-minded. That is what art should do."

'YOU HAVEN'T HEARD KATIE YET'

"No one hears Katie the way I do," says Pancho. "What she puts on her albums is close, like ninety-eight percent, but that two percent she gives live, that is what hooked me. That is what we are chasing on the next record."

Katie smiles. "We are already planning album number ten for 2026. I have about fourteen song ideas already."

Pancho laughs. "Fourteen? Okay, I am going to make some money on this record."

OUTLAW DOC AND THE MOSQUITO

Outlaw Doc was transformed from a gritty blues tune into something cinematic. "That was the most jarring one for me," Katie admits. "But I can totally picture it in a Quentin Tarantino movie."

Pancho calls it "a social experiment," with a relentless beat inspired by late 90s British breakbeat. "I even chopped up Mick Martin's harmonica and ran it through filters."

Katie's voice softens at the mention of the late Mick Martin. "He heard that remix before he died. I asked for permission to release it and he said, 'Well, I did not know I played the mosquito, but yeah.' He was always encouraging, telling me to be as original as I wanted, no apologies."

BEYOND THE BLUES

For both Katie and Pancho, Dance Me is more than a remix album, it is a statement of artistic freedom.

"It is about showing the world that blues and Americana can live anywhere," Katie says. "These songs still have heart and soul, they just dance a little differently now."

Pancho nods. "We are artists. Why stay in one lane when you can drive across all of them?"

Asked how the blues fraternity might react, Katie just laughs. "I think they would want what he wants, for us to release it and have fun."

"In my punk head I was thinking, I do not give a fuck what they think," Pancho grins. "But really, blues is art and art evolves. If blues had stayed the same, we would never have had Black Sabbath. Some people will hate it; some will love it. That is the point, to get her songs into spaces where she would not normally be heard. It is just music."

THE HEAVY SIDE OF THE BLUES

Their collaboration on Lava Pot was the first test of this fearless chemistry.

"That was the one Pancho remixed first," Katie recalls. "It was so metal I got scared. I told him, 'This should be sexy, not like me going after someone with a machete.'"

Pancho laughs. "Yeah, I went a little wild. But that is how I wanted it, heavy like Sabbath or Gov't Mule. Katie's voice is huge, and when you put it in that context, it just locks."

He has played with everyone from Slayer's Dave Lombardo to War and Tower of Power. "From punk to funk, that is me. I get labelled a metal bass player, but it is still real music, people playing from the heart. That is why I connect so much with blues, it is all emotion."

TIME, SPACE AND STILLNESS

When the conversation turns to Time And Space, Katie pictures "two people slow dancing under a mirror ball, dreamy and emotional."

Pancho leans into his love of late 70s and early 80s ambient music. "On Time And Space I tried to bring that underwater, ethereal feel. Then I added a fretless bass solo to keep it organic, because it is Katie, and she is real. I did not want it all on the grid. The tempo moves like a wave, not a machine."

Another standout, Stillness, grew from Katie's voice and piano into a roots rock reggae groove. "Al Rodriguez from War played drums," she says. "It has that simple, powerful pulse." Pancho followed her vocal lines with a reggae-styled bass and reharmonised the chorus. "It came together fast. One of my favourites. And that is how we play it live."

The Devil's Armchair fuses choral harmonies with Latin-flavoured grooves. Pancho built the track around a hook from Katie's stacked choir parts, added a Chicano-twist bass line and drum and bass energy, plus ambient horns and, memorably, a tuba. "Maybe I mixed it a little bass-heavy," he jokes.

JUST MUSIC, NO LABELS

Despite their different musical upbringings, both agree on one thing.

"It is just music," Katie says. "Good music is good music."

"I have been called a metalhead, a punk, a funk guy," Pancho adds, "but really I am just a bass player. If I can play it, I play it. If I cannot, I will find someone who can."

MASSIVE INFLUENCES

The song GO carries a strong British trip-hop feel. "I was thinking Massive Attack," Pancho says. Katie nods. "Massive Attack was a huge influence on this project overall. We are all completely genre-fluid. Every time I hear good music I think, wow, I like this way more than I expected."

Pancho recalls recording with Tricky in Los Angeles, drawing on that experience for GO. "He was not classically trained, but he knew when things sounded good. That ear is everything. I used that background to help craft the song."

EXPERIMENT AND RETURN

For Katie, Dance Me is “a fun little in-between experiment, like kids on a trampoline seeing how high we can jump.”

“But going into the new year, I am back to what I do, more organic stuff. The next record might be the bluesiest thing I have ever done, just to stir the pot again. I never write with a marketing plan. I just chase the feeling. Some people will love it, some will not, and that is fine. It is like wine, you are not supposed to love the same bottle every time.”

OPENING THE DOOR TO NEW EARS

“I like that we are inviting more demographics into our world,” she says. “A lot of people see I have been labelled a blues artist and think it is not for them. Then they hear us live and go, ‘I did not know what to expect, but I love this.’ That is how we sell records, on stage.”

Live, songs like Lava Pot have grown even heavier. “My guitar is electric now instead of dobro, and that monstrous amp shifts everything. Toward the end I get pretty uninhibited, there is headbanging, sometimes I am literally on the floor.”

“She is on the floor and I am like, ‘Where did she go?’” laughs Pancho. “Dirty stage, nosebleeds, chaos, but that is what it is.”

A BRIDGE, NOT A BREAK

“The idea was to build a bridge between the last album and what is coming next,” Pancho explains. “We did not want to go dormant for a year. So this became a little island, something to keep us sane and give fans something fresh.”

Knipp calls it “a shiny pink vinyl that is selling a lot right now,” but both see it as momentum rather than merchandise. “It is like a little chapter,” Pancho adds. “It is Me, and now it is Me: The Remix, like me on Halloween with a sparkly coat on.”

Katie laughs. “Exactly, a fancy sparkly coat.”

Already restless, she is writing again. “I am impatient. I have so many songs in my phone’s voice memos. We are taking a little break from shows over the holidays so I can finish them.”

“We will just keep making things,” she says. “Whatever makes us feel like kids on trampolines, that is what we will chase. It could end up one hundred percent rock and roll, who knows?”

Pancho agrees. “The important part is to keep creating with purpose, with the right message. Use what we do to get through what is going on and have fun.”

EXPLORE

BYWATER CALL LIVE REVIEW

The Tuesday Night Music Club
KEEPING MUSIC
Live

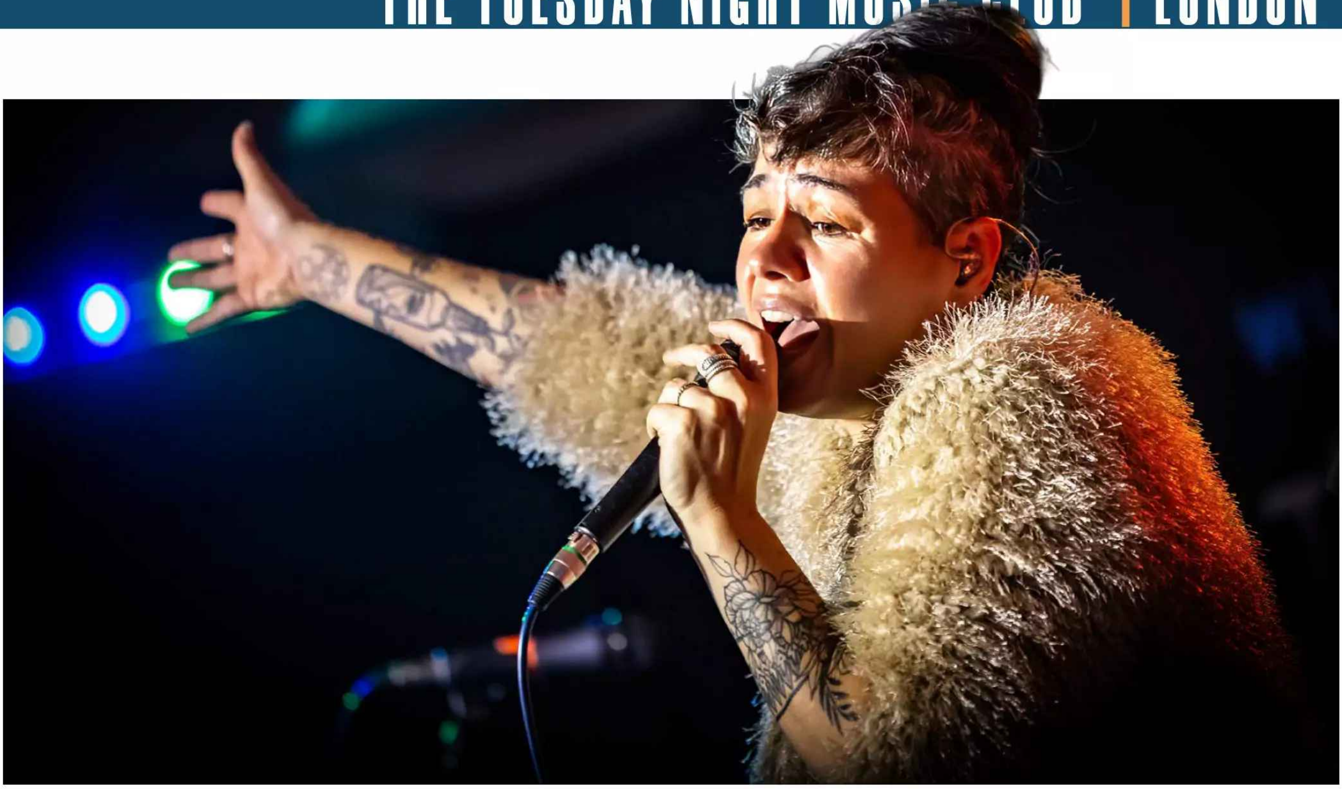
Paul Long Tony Cole

It is starting to become a tradition, Bywater Call opening their U.K. tour with a secret gig at The Tuesday Night Music Club in Coulsdon. This show had sold out many weeks previously with no publicity or announcement. Bywater Call are destined for much larger venues, but they are not alone in loving the intimate atmosphere at this club.

They truly are a band; although one is immediately bewitched by the incredible vocal talent of singer Meghan Parnell, you are soon drawn in to the mesmeric guitar of Dave Barnes and how every member is a crucial part of the groove and soul of Bywater Call, so I will name-check Bruce McCarthy on drums, Mike Meusel (bass), keyboard player John Kervin and the horn section: Stephen Dyte (trumpet) and Julian Nalli (tenor sax).

They begin with a new song, 'Hold Me Down,' which sounds like a 60s soul anthem that you already knew, then that voice kicks in and it is clear that we are in for an inspirational evening. This is followed by 'Roll,' from their album 'Shepherd,' with its beautiful a Capella ending. The highlights here are some excellent slide guitar from Dave Barnes, and the powerful horn section (who are also dab hands at backing vocals and percussion). Some of the new songs are just jaw-dropping. In the first set the standout is 'Only.' The first half closes with an incredible version of 'Left Behind,' a personal favourite and its power hits everybody in the room.
In the second set the crowd sings along enthusiastically to 'Sweet Maria.' Then the truly stunning new song 'Clutter' is followed by their take on The Band's 'Don't Do It.' The final number 'Everybody Knows' brings the first of two standing ovations and a call for more. A shout-out from the audience elicits a diversion from the set list for a rousing take of 'Love The One You're With,' which brings out the jam band in them as every player is given chance to shine in a series of extended solos.

By a country mile this is my favourite current live band. You will have to go a long way to beat the passion and soul of Meghan and the powerhouse band that is Bywater Call. Do yourself a favour and go and see them - you will be as captivated as the sold-out Tuesday Night Music Club.



Tuesday
Music Club

COLIN & ROBBIE

IN THE US OF A

Chicago Blues Festival 2025

Day 3 – 6 June 2025

Opening on the Visit Mississippi Crossroads Stage in mid-afternoon, the Johnny Rawls Soul Review delivered the polished, deeply soulful set his reputation promises. He opened with Red Cadillac, which had the crowd dancing, followed by Shake It. His daughter, Destini Rawls, joined him for powerful renditions of Chain of Fools and I'd Rather Go Blind. The set closed with I'll Take You There.

The official programme at the Jay Pritzker Pavilion began with opening remarks, the National Anthem and Lift Every Voice, setting a reverent tone.

DK Harrell opened the main stage with a performance that evoked B.B. King without ever becoming imitation. His band, supported by a horn section, delivered a crisp, polished sound. Songs such as Vibe With Me and PTLD (Post Traumatic Love Disorder) showcased Harrell's storytelling and sharp tone. He referenced his back-story, including being homeless only three years ago. His classic blues phrasing, combined with modern drive, made him a natural fit for the B.B. King tribute later that evening. He effectively bridged heritage and the present moment.

Dawn Tyler Watson followed with jazz-trained vocal finesse and commanding stage presence. Her set, which included Lost, I Look Good, Love to Burn and Shine On, was delivered with precision. Her sparkling stage attire and charismatic movement created a striking visual performance, proving the festival's breadth extends far beyond guitar-led blues and into vocal power and cross-genre artistry.

Closing the night on the Pritzker stage was the headline tribute marking the 100th anniversary of B.B. King's birth. A powerhouse line-up featuring Kingfish, Harrell and Jonathan Ellison joined the full Centennial Band. The set included classics such as Every Day I Have the Blues, The Thrill Is Gone and Been Downhearted Baby. The chemistry on stage was palpable: Kingfish trading licks with Harrell and Ellison created moments that felt both reverent and forward-looking.

Mayor Brandon Johnson had declared 6 June as B.B. King Day in Chicago, adding weight to the occasion. With a full horn section and a large ensemble, the sound was grand, celebratory and rooted in legacy. It was a major highlight of the festival.

We rounded out the night at Buddy Guy's Legends, where John Primer delivered a superb late-night set in one of Chicago's true blues landmarks.

Day 4 – 7 June 2025

At Rosa's Lounge, the Stefan Hillesheim Band opened with striking confidence. Hillesheim's slide guitar work was bold and clean, and his vocals carried warmth and drive. The material leaned heavily on original songs,

ALLIGATOR RECORDS
GENUINE HOUSEROCKIN' MUSIC
SINCE 1971
STAFF

reinforcing his commitment to shaping his own blues narrative. A rock-tinged shuffle mid-set rallied the room, with tight rhythm, layered guitar lines and strong organ fills. State of Your Love was a standout moment.

Back at the Jay Pritzker Pavilion, the Saturday afternoon crowd packed in for the Women in Blues Tribute to Denise LaSalle. The line-up included Nellie "Tiger" Travis, Thornetta Davis, Nora Jean Wallace and Mzz Reese, directed by Jonathan Ellison. The skyline backdrop and free outdoor setting created a vibrant atmosphere. The set featured LaSalle favourites including Trapped by a Thing Called Love, A Real Sad Story, Ugly Man and the rousing finale Don't Mess With My Toot Toot. All four vocalists shared verses and harmonised, giving the tribute a true sense of celebration.

The band was tight throughout, with Ellison's direction ensuring the groove remained solid while allowing plenty of vocal space.

Next came the acoustic-leaning trio of Joey J. Saye, Stephen Hull and Harrell Davenport, delivering young-blood blues grounded in old-soul roots. Their take on Blind Boy Fuller's Keep on Truckin' Mama was a highlight. The interplay between guitars and Young Rell's raw harmonica added texture. The set acted as a bridge between Delta heritage and modern expression.

Soul-blues great Latimore followed. At 85, he remains a commanding presence. His set blended blues standards with his own southern-soul catalogue, including Straighten It Out and I'm an Old Dog (But I Can Still Bury the Bone). Humorous, smooth and charismatic, Latimore held the audience with ease.

The headliner, Christone Kingfish Ingram, delivered what may have been the festival's defining performance. The crowd was on its feet immediately and stayed there.

Kingfish moved into the audience, turning the park into a vast juke joint. Musically, the set fused deep blues, funk, gospel and soul. Keyboard and organ player D'Shawn "DVibes" Alexander added rich church-like layers beneath the guitar lines. The performance felt like a statement of where modern blues is headed.

The night continued at Buddy Guy's Legends with Kat

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"EXHILARATING BRAVURA AND LYRICAL DELICACY"
EMMANUEL PAHUD
with Les Violons du Roy
OCTOBER 24, 2012 7:30pm
THE CHAMBER MUSIC SOCIETY OF LINCOLN CENTER
QUINTESSENTIAL QUARTETS
APRIL 5, 2013 | 7:30 PM

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2120 S. Mi

Riggins, joined by Kingfish and Dawn Tyler Watson. We finished the early hours at Kingston Mines, where Kingfish and Stephen Hull jammed joyfully into the night.

Day 5 – 8 June 2025

At Rosa's Lounge, the Jimmy Burns Band delivered a warm, intimate set. Burns' voice carried lived-in depth, and his rendition of Stand by Me connected his doo-wop roots with his blues craft. His guitar was crisp and expressive without unnecessary flash. The band's tight playing and well-paced set created a sense of closeness despite the large-festival context.

Sunday evening at the Pritzker Pavilion opened with a tribute to the 75th anniversary of Chess Records, presented by the Willie Dixon Blues Heaven Foundation. This acted as both homage and history lesson. Mud Morganfield stepped into his father's classics including Rolling Stone, Hoochie Coochie Man and I Just Want to Make Love to You. Chuck Berry's family delivered Johnny B. Goode. Alonzo Jones gave spirited performances of Howlin' Wolf favourites Spoonful and Smokestack Lightning. The set highlighted the constellation of voices that built Chicago blues and reinforced the city's pivotal role.

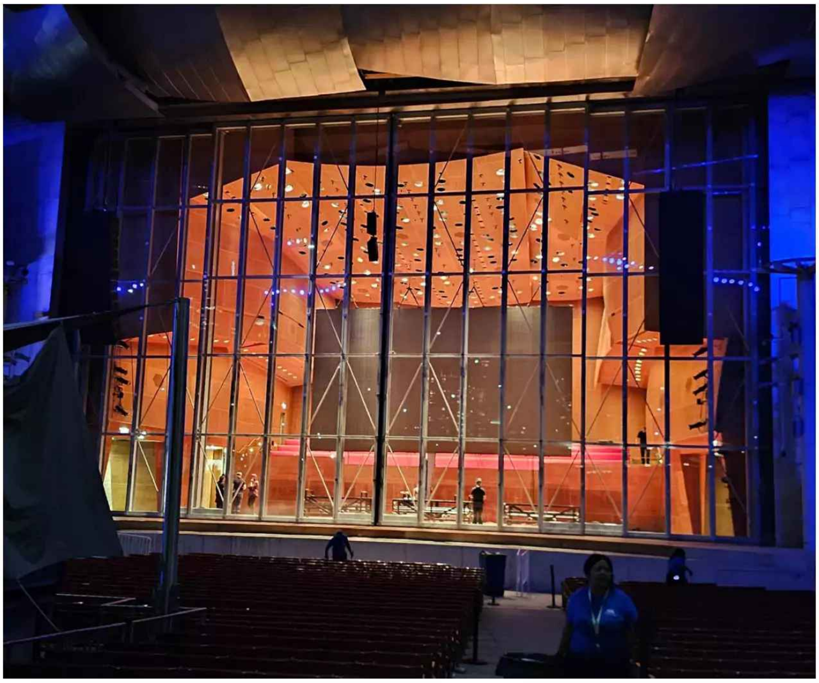
CJ Chenier and his band followed with a burst of Creole and bayou energy. Accordion, rub-board rhythms and horns brought zydeco fire to the evening. This broader southern influence was a welcome shift in pace and a reminder of the blues' diverse roots. Rain delays slowed the changeover, but once the band locked in, the crowd moved with them.

Next came a Chicago-flavoured pairing of Lurrie Bell and saxophonist Frank Catalano. Bell's grit and emotional honesty met Catalano's jazz-tinged sax lines for a set that was both familiar and fresh, bridging legacy and continuation.

Closing the festival, Mavis Staples delivered an exceptional finale. A Chicago icon, she brought gospel, blues and soul into a unified, powerful performance. With the skies cleared and the crowd returned in full, Staples urged the audience to "never look back and keep marching for love, peace and justice". Her set felt like a statement on survival, unity and musical heritage. The crowd sang, stood and embraced the moment.

We ended the night back at Rosa's Lounge with the Stephen Hull Band, an energetic close to a remarkable festival.

For more information visit:
https://www.chicago.gov/city/en/depts/dca/supp_info/chicago_blues_festival.html



Rosa's
AUTHORIZED PERSONNEL ONLY
EXI

LOOKING BACK AT THE BLUES ALBUMS THAT SHAPED 2025

As the year winds down, it feels like the perfect moment to take stock of the music that carried us through it. Our contributors, presenters and reviewers have each chosen the albums that stayed with them the longest, resulting in a broad and vivid snapshot of a strong year for blues, roots and Americana.

This roundup brings together the highlights from every submitted top five list. Each choice reflects individual taste, but together they map out the sounds and stories that defined 2025.

SAMANTHA FISH
PAPER DOLL

EMERGING VOICES AND MODERN STORYTELLERS

Several albums this year stood out for showcasing rising talent. Connor Selby's release brought together soulful songwriting, expressive guitar work and a sense of promise that marks him as one to watch. Sean McDonald made a memorable impact too, with a confident and energetic debut that announced a new artist stepping into the genre.

Samantha Fish continued to push boundaries, with an album full of inventive arrangements and vibrant playing that demonstrated her commitment to moving beyond the expected.

JOE BONAMASSA BREAKTHROUGH

ICONS RETURNING WITH PURPOSE

2025 also saw powerful statements from established names. Joe Bonamassa delivered one of his most mature and blues focused albums in recent years, pairing strong vocals with impeccable musicianship. Walter Trout offered a hard edged, emotionally charged set that mirrored the unrest and tension of the modern world. Taj Mahal and Keb Mo, two master craftsmen, came together for a warm and gracious record steeped in tradition.

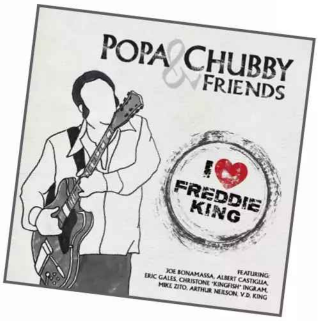
ARCHIVAL TREASURES AND HISTORIC BLUES

Some contributors were drawn to releases that unearthed or celebrated the blues' deeper history. One standout was a collection spotlighting early recordings from artists who would later become foundations of the genre, reminding listeners of the importance of preservation. A reissue highlighting the distinctive voice and influence of Nellie Lutcher also offered a welcome return to an artist whose contributions still resonate.

TEDESCHI TRUCKS BAND AND LEON RUSSELL PRESENT
MAD DOGS & ENGLISHMEN
REVISITED LIVE AT LOCKN'

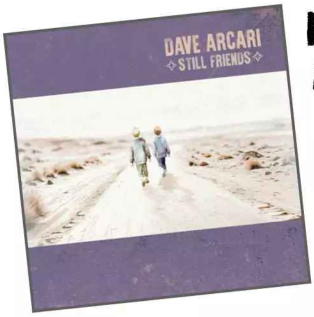
LIVE ENERGY AND UNFORGETTABLE PERFORMANCES

Live albums featured heavily this year, capturing artists at their most dynamic. Gary Moore's concert recording revealed the full power of his playing, featuring classics delivered with the intensity he was known for. The long awaited release of the Tedeschi Trucks Band's performance at Lockn' showcased a remarkable ensemble honouring the Joe Cocker catalogue with passion and precision.


POPA & CHUBBY FRIENDS
I ♥ FREDDIE KING
FEATURING: JOE BONAMASSA, ALBERT CASTIGLIA, ERIC GALES, CHRISTONE "KINGFISH" INGRAM, MIKE ZITO, ARTHUR NELSON, V.D. KING

STANDOUT COLLABORATIVE PROJECTS

Collaboration remained a vital thread throughout 2025. Popa Chubby's tribute to Freddie King, joined by a range of guest musicians, felt heartfelt and joyous. The partnership of Giles Robson and John Primer produced a fresh and engaging take on Chicago blues staples, showing how great musicians can elevate timeless material.

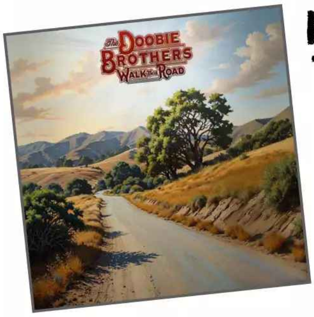


ROOTS, SOUL AND AMERICANA INFLUENCES

This year saw a continued blending of styles. Kimmie Rhodes delivered a beautifully crafted, sensitively produced album that captured her songwriting at its finest. Dave Arcari's stripped back release showed the raw power of voice and guitar alone. Laura Cox impressed with a punchy, confident record that cemented her upward momentum in the rock and blues world.

REINVENTION, RESILIENCE AND LEGACY

For some artists, 2025 marked a new chapter. Burning Rope's self titled album carried forward the legacy of Matt Long with dignity and creativity. Robert Plant and Saving Grace continued to prioritise innovation over nostalgia, offering fresh material with a sense of artistic freedom and intimacy.



RECORDS THAT SIMPLY BROUGHT JOY

Plenty of albums were chosen for the sheer pleasure they brought. King Size delivered one of those rare records that lifts your mood from the first track to the last. The Doobie Brothers returned with a set full of memorable songs and lively grooves, proving that long running bands can still surprise and delight listeners.

A FINAL WORD ON A REMARKABLE YEAR

Taken together, the selections from our contributors show just how varied and vital the blues remains. Whether through young artists finding their voice, legends returning with renewed focus, or long forgotten recordings resurfacing, the music of 2025 gave us plenty to celebrate.

NOT TO MISS ALBUMS OF 2025

- Afton Wolfe – Ophiuchus
- An Diaz & Yokatta Brothers – Komorebi in New Orleans
- Brave Rival – 5 to 4
- Burning Rope – Burning Rope
- Carolyn Wonderland – Truth Is
- Chantel McGregor – The Healing
- Chris Daniels & The Kings with Freddi Gowdy – Blues With Horns Vol II
- Connor Selby – The Truth Comes Out Eventually
- Dave Arcari – Still Friends
- Doobie Brothers – Walk This Road
- Emma Wilson – A Spoonful of Willie Dixon
- Erin Harpe – Let the Mermaids Flirt With Me
- Gary Moore – Live (Baloise Session)
- Giles Robson & John Primer – Ten Chicago Blues Classics
- Jimmy Burns – Full Circle
- Jon Cleary – The Bywater Sessions
- Keb Mo & Taj Mahal – Room on the Porch
- Kimmie Rhodes – West Texas Heaven Revisited
- Kingfish – Hard Road
- King Size – Big Shoes
- Laura Cox – Trouble Coming
- Little Feat – Strike Up the Band
- Mercedes Nicole – Too High a Price to Pay
- Mike Farris – The Sound of Muscle Shoals
- Nellie Lutcher – Real Gone 1947–56
- Popa Chubby & Friends – I Love Freddie King
- Robert Jon & The Wreck – Heartbreaks and Last Goodbyes
- Robert Plant & Saving Grace – Saving Grace
- Samantha Fish – Paper Doll
- Sandy Atkinson – The Best of Sandy Atkinson
- Sean McDonald – Have Mercy
- Steve Postell – Walking Through These Blues
- Tedeschi Trucks Band – Mad Dogs and Englishmen Live at Lockn'
- The Boneshakers – Live To Be This
- The Johnny Otis Blues Caravan – The Duke Peacock Sessions Part One
- Tom Hambridge – Down the Hatch
- Walter Trout – Sign of the Times
- When Rivers Meet – Addicted to You
- Wily Bo Walker – The Rattling Bone Theatre Show Vol 1

Fender

HEADING BACK TO STATE STREET

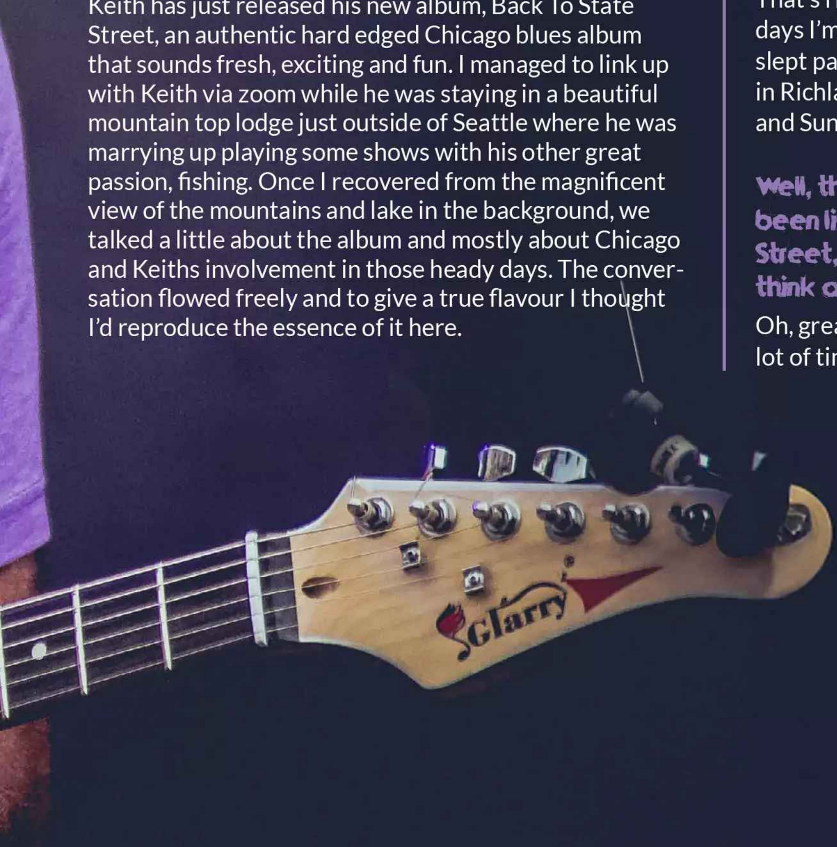
WITH KEITH SCOTT

Keith Scott might not be a household name, but in blues circles he is well respected and steeped in the history of Chicago Blues since moving there as a young man aiming to find Hubert Sumlin and play with him, which he did.

Steve Yourglivch　Supplied

Keith was a part of the vibrant blues scene around the city through the 70s and 80s which saw the creation and emergence of Alligator Records with top class blues ringing out on virtually every street corner.

Keith has just released his new album, Back To State Street, an authentic hard edged Chicago blues album that sounds fresh, exciting and fun. I managed to link up with Keith via zoom while he was staying in a beautiful mountain top lodge just outside of Seattle where he was marrying up playing some shows with his other great passion, fishing. Once I recovered from the magnificent view of the mountains and lake in the background, we talked a little about the album and mostly about Chicago and Keiths involvement in those heady days. The conversation flowed freely and to give a true flavour I thought I'd reproduce the essence of it here.



What a fantastic view behind you Keith, I'm guessing as it's early morning there you're planning to go fishing. Most musicians aren't up for early morning interviews.

That's right, soon as we're finished, I'm out fishing. These days I'm always up early, I've been up since 5.30. I haven't slept past 6 o'clock in about 20 years. Tonight, I'm playing in Richland, Washington. Tomorrow it's Eugene, Oregan and Sunday, Seattle.

Well, thanks for making the time to talk to us. I've been listening to the new album, Back to State Street, and I'm really enjoying it. It's very much, I think a kind of Chicago blues album.

Oh, great. That was our goal, man. You know, because a lot of times I'm going in these studios and I'm spending all this money and, it's all this fancy equipment and all this stuff. And it never quite comes out like authentic Chicago blues. So this time, my friend Tony McQuaid has a studio in his basement and he said, let's just do your album here. And it was right downtown, like in a neighbourhood in Chicago. And he just seems like he knows the sound.

It reminded me a lot of those early Alligator records, like Hound Dog Taylor and Son Seals.

Oh, I love Son Seals, man. Raw. Great. I just think we got it, we did two sessions, so this was just one of them and we have another one ready to go. I think recording in a basement in this old mansion just kinda worked. Plus, it's only down the street from Muddy Waters original house so it had a certain vibe.

I think it has a live feel to it, the last track Hot Toddy certainly sounds live.

It's pretty much live, we were just there one day, I did a couple of little fill-ins and a tweak or two. You go to these other studios and I'm going back and mastering and mixing and tracking and I mean it comes out good, but I think I want to stick with this formula, sometimes you can mess with something a little bit too much.

The albums called Back To State Street, what's the significance of that?

Well, I think it's one of the most important places in Chicago, because when I first moved there, there was a real famous club owner named Johnny Pepper and he had a club at Eleventh and State that I got to play, and it was the mainstream street for blues in Chicago back starting in the 50s and when the electric sound came out. I think the best club in Chicago now is a place called Reggie's on South State Street, my bass player Adam Arling and me were just standing there and we're saying what are we going to call the album. I just looked up and saw the street sign and said lets call it Back To State Street.

The previous album of yours that I listened to was, Better World Out There, which is a few years old now, that was more kind of Mississippi, almost had a Hill Country feel to it. This one is very much a Chicago album.

Cool, man. It's kind of weird, I have a terrible habit of doing something, and then I totally forget about what I did. But we actually recorded that in the bass player's studio up on the North Side. And it was the same kind of thing. It didn't cost me anything. And we just recorded it in his little studio on North California Avenue. And, you know, I think it's pretty raw. I love that Hill Country, Fat Possum stuff. As a Chicago artist, I didn't pay much attention to it. And then when I listened to it, It was just wow. Like the Junior Kimbrough and Burnside and all those things.

There's a thread running through your career and music that the harder edged side of blues is your thing. But going back a bit you were born around New York and spent the majority of your childhood in Florida.

I was born in White Plains, New York and then spent High School and College years in Florida, that's where I discovered blues music through listening to bands like Ten Years After, Led Zeppelin, Clapton, Cream, Hendrix, they were a huge influence. My friend Steve Arvey, who still plays in England quite a lot, gave me an article about Hubert Sumlin and how Hubert was Jimmy Page's favourite guitarist. So I decided, I'm going to drop out of school, travel to Chicago and try to meet Hubert. And I did, and I got to play with him. He was the nicest guy you could ever want to meet.

Of course, he's best known for playing with Howlin' Wolf but he plated with Muddy too.

I think he did one year with Muddy, and then Wolf, like, showed up at Muddy's house and said, I'll kill you if you don't let him go. I'm pretty sure that's the truth, man. I think Wolf showed up and said, if you want to live, you better let Hubert come back to me or something. I've heard, and I never got, unfortunately, to see him, but I know a lot of people that played with him, and I don't think he was anybody to mess with. Same with Albert King, you didn't mess with those people.

I've heard a lot of stories about Albert King, who was originally a bulldozer driver I believe.

Yeah, a truck driver, a bulldozer driver and originally a drummer. Son Seals started out as a drummer too.

I think Son Seals is so under-estimated. He should be up there with those other guys.

Yeah, he really is, and it's one of those things I took for granted. He used to play at Blues on Halstead Street in Chicago. The cover charge was like $3, right? And I've seen him like 50 times. I should have seen him 500 times. And he was so nice, man. He'd come and he'd sit with my mom and I and he'd talk to us. He was so powerful and it's just a little club you could just walk in for a few dollars and then once I started playing around, I could just go right up and sit with them or talk to them and listen to them and when you take that for granted it's unbelievable. The other one in Chicago I didn't spend enough time listening to was Jimmy Rogers and he was readily available to go see for about $2.

It's unbelievable, isn't it? Well, the other guy I really want to talk to you about, because I know you played with him and I'm a huge fan, is Jimmy Dawkins, who is another one I think who's seriously underrated.

Well, I'm really glad that you know about him because, I mean, people don't realise how good he was, man. I got to tell you, man, he was a tough band leader too. He had that Albert King in him, believe me. His forearms were like Mike Tyson. It wasn't like you're playing with him and you're just laughing and telling jokes. You're a little bit worried that he might kill you if you don't play well or something. He turned out to be a really good friend at the end, you know what I mean.

How long did you play with him?

Off and on for twenty years. Non-stop for three or four years but then off and on for fifteen years. Jimmy was also very good as a producer and I've heard he was involved in booking bands and stuff like that too. Not only that, but it is remotely possible that he was worth millions of dollars because he bought up all the publishing from a lot of blues artists. He was kind of a genius. He knew how to get everybody to get registered with BMI, the music company, because a lot of people, couldn't even read. And he would go and make sure they would get paid. And I think Jimmy Dawkins, they wouldn't admit it, but I think him and Buddy Guy and Junior Wells were really close. One time we were in the van, and we stopped by a Buddy Guy's club, and he went in and had this meeting with Buddy and it was all business. It was all about songwriting and publishing. He was a very smart operator, he started buying property all over Chicago, saying these neighbourhoods on the West Side the city's going to come in and put tons of money in it and I'm just going to keep on buying these little houses. I think he had about 10 little houses that got bought by all the developers.

When he turned it on and turned up, he was amazing. He loved Marshall amplifiers, my eardrums took a pounding, that's one of the reasons I started playing more acoustic, I couldn't hear for about 10 years.

I presume you played mostly rhythm guitar when you were with him?

He let me play lead, but my job was to learn how to play rhythm and that was probably the best that for me because I think in retrospect rhythm is the hardest thing to play. One time I went back after I started doing my own thing and played with Jimmy and I guess my rhythm playing had kind of fallen apart. He was going, what happened to your guitar playing man you sound terrible because I was out there playing lead and jumping around. He said man what happened.

Going back to your new album, I noticed you have the great Carl Snyder playing on it, plus some other great musicians.

He was Junior Wells keyboard player for a long time, so he brings a lot of that Chicago feel to the whole thing. I have played also with his two sons, Saul and Matt, both very gifted too. Saul recently joined Bryan Adams band, and Matt is Morrisey's drummer. Apparently, Carl was real famous as a writer for Playboy magazine and when Junior Wells asked him to play, he quit his job and joined. The drummer on the album is Joe Winters; he's more of a rock drummer from a band called Steepwater. Also check out Marvin Jackson, he played guitar with Albert Collins on all those early Alligator recordings.

Back to Alligator again, they played a big role, didn't they?

One story I have is that I did a double header with Joe Bonamassa at House Of Blues before he got his big break. Bruce Iglauer came down and asked could Joe go on first because they wanted to see about signing him. Joe played and blew the place apart and then everybody left. We ended up playing to about two people, one of which was the sound guy! I don't know why he didn't end up signing for them, but they sure missed the boat on that.

Another guy you spent time with was Bo Diddly.
That was when I was still at college. Steve Arvey says to me, oh, I'm playing with Bo Diddly tonight at the Spring Fair, we like 17 years old. So, I went along and got backstage to meet Bo Diddly. He was great and invited us back to his house, the next day we went back and he cooked a barbecue for us. He was so nice.

And Hip Linkchain? Another tough player.

Oh I'm so glad you mentioned him. He was like Magic Sam but a sloppy version. Magic Sam's playing is perfect right? Hip was all over the place, but his sound was amazing. Jimmy stole me from Hip, he saw me with him and said he wanted me to join his band. When you got with those guys it was like you were their employee. It's not like you were getting rich but you know you're going to play, and you stick with it. Those guys didn't like it if you started playing with someone else.

You've had a good career though, I know you've got several albums out there and you tour a lot. Japan recently for one.

The producer Tony McQuaid brought me over to Japan and they loved it man. I always wanted to go there after I heard Otis Rush Live In Japan, so it was a dream come true. One of the things I hope to do soon is to come over to the UK. I hope we can help make that happen.

EXPLORE

THE NEXT GENERATION OF BLUES AT SEA

The Legendary Rhythm & Blues Cruise #43 once again proved why it remains one of the most cherished institutions in the global blues community. Sailing with a sold-out ship filled with devoted fans, world-class musicians, and the unmistakable sense of camaraderie that defines the LRBC experience, this year's voyage delivered unforgettable performances from bow to stern.

Laura Carbone

KONINGSDAM
Holland America Line

While veteran artists such as Keb' Mo', Kenny Wayne Shepherd, Rick Estrin, Danielle Nicole, Shemekia Copeland and Bobby Rush provided the seasoned brilliance that cruisers love, it was the extraordinary presence of a young, fast-rising generation of Black musicians that shaped the soul of this journey. Christone "Kingfish" Ingram, Dylan Triplett, DK Harrell, Stephen Hull, Mathias Lattin, Sean "Mack" McDonald and Marquise Knox were not just representing the future of the blues — they were the blues of right now, commanding every stage on the ship.

CHRISTONE "KINGFISH" INGRAM

A Grammy-winning guitarist and vocalist from Clarksdale, Mississippi, Kingfish has become the defining blues breakout of his generation. With a tone that recalls the deepest Delta roots and a stage presence both explosive and effortless, he bridges tradition and innovation. His keyboardist, Deshawn "D-Vibes" Alexander, was named Jammer of the Cruise on LRBC #43 after spending night after night playing with everyone until dawn and adding soulful B3 fire to every set.

DYLAN TRIPLETT

A rising soul-blues vocalist from St Louis, Dylan Triplett stunned the cruise with a voice steeped in gospel warmth and the charisma of a natural frontman. His debut album Who Is He? earned international acclaim, and his forthcoming release is already creating excitement. Dylan's ability to blend classic soul with contemporary blues, together with his natural charm, made him a standout favourite.

DK HARRELL

From Ruston, Louisiana, DK Harrell is one of the most promising young bluesmen of the modern era. His debut album The Right Man launched him to international recognition, and his stage style — a blend of charm, vintage Chicago blues, and heartfelt sincerity — made him a fan favourite on the cruise. DK's performances channel B.B. King's melodic touch while showcasing his own modern personality and energy.

STEPHEN HULL

Hailing from Wisconsin, Stephen Hull leads his band, The Stephen Hull Experience. He first drew major attention after competing at the International Blues Challenge (IBC) in Memphis, where he earned second place — a remarkable achievement that placed him firmly in the spotlight as one of the top young blues guitarists in the world. Hull represents the elegant, soulful side of contemporary blues guitar. His tone is warm and expressive, his vocals rich and mature, and his interplay with other musicians on the cruise was electric. Expect to see him on stages across Europe and North America.

MATHIAS LATTIN

A young Houston guitarist and vocalist, Mathias Lattin won first place in the International Blues Challenge and has quickly become a name to watch. His style blends Texas blues, soul, and jazz influences with impressive musicianship and songwriting. On the cruise, he impressed with sharp guitar work, inventive phrasing, and a fresh, contemporary sound that signals where the blues is headed.

SEAN "MACK" MCDONALD

Raised in Augusta, Georgia, and now based in Tennessee, Sean "Mack" McDonald is a multi-instrumentalist who was playing drums at two years old and guitar by seven. Rooted in traditional 1940s–60s blues but capable of playing almost anything, he has stepped out from sideman roles to become a compelling frontman now touring across Europe.

MARQUISE KNOX

Marquise Knox is one of the most authentic and important voices of the modern blues generation. Born in St Louis, Missouri, in 1991, Knox carries a musical lineage deeply rooted in the Mississippi Delta. Vocally, he is a powerhouse — rich, commanding, and drenched in soul. His guitar playing combines the earthy drive of Muddy Waters with the emotional sting of Albert King. His songs are grounded in real stories and social awareness, making him a complete modern blues artist.

Together, these young artists did not simply perform — they ignited the ship. They jammed until dawn ("until you could smell the breakfast bacon cooking"), collaborated across generations, and connected with cruisers who instantly recognised them as the new torchbearers. LRBC #43 showcased one of the strongest line-ups of genuine youth talent seen on any cruise or festival in recent years. The future of the blues did not just arrive; it took the stage, owned the ship, and left everyone wanting more.

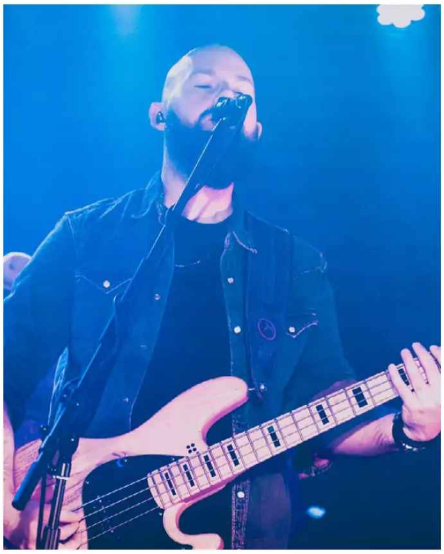
With future sailings expected to continue this movement, early reservations are essential, as this legendary experience always sells out.

Find out more at www.bluescruise.com

BLUES FESTIVAL GUIDE

HOLLOW SOULS & TROY REDFERN

Ian Potter



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CHRISTMAS IN JAIL AND MEMPHIS MAGIC

CHRISTOPHER WYZE ON FESTIVE BLUES, EMMA WILSON AT ROYAL STUDIOS

Christmas and the blues might not sound like natural partners at first. For American singer and songwriter Christopher Wyze, though, they belong together.

Stephen Harrison   Supplied

"People think Christmas is supposed to be happy," he reflects, "but if you are a normal person, there is always a twinge of nostalgia, memories of people who are no longer with you. The blues have always had room for that."

From that starting point came two new Christmas recordings that link the present day with a song first released almost a century ago, and a whirlwind Memphis session that pulled together label connections, legendary musicians, and British blues singer Emma Wilson, all on a single September afternoon.

A STUDIO BAND BUILT FOR THE DIGITAL AGE

Wyze's route into the modern blues world is a little different from most. Rather than grinding out years on the road, his band has existed primarily as a recording unit.

"We are mainly a studio band," he explains. "Our fans are virtual. They are all over the world, and they are waiting to hear our music. Instead of us going to see them, our music travels for us."

After releasing Live in Clarksdale in April, Wyze wanted to keep the momentum going. Christmas seemed like the perfect moment to send something new into the world. Initially, he considered writing originals, but a deep dive into old recordings in his home city of Indianapolis sent him in another direction.

That is where he rediscovered Christmas in Jail (Ain't That a Pain), first recorded in 1929 by Leroy Carr and Scrapper Blackwell.

"I had been listening to their music for years," he says. "They spent most of their lives in Indianapolis. Their big hit How Long, How Long Blues was recorded there. I got into that whole Carr and Blackwell thing, who are these guys, what did they do, and Christmas in Jail just tore my heart out. I thought, I have to do that song someday."

CONNECTING WITH EMMA WILSON

The missing piece arrived via Memphis distributor Select-O-Hits and its Big Radio Records imprint, run by Johnny Phillips, nephew of Sun Records founder Sam Phillips. Both Wyze and UK singer Emma Wilson work with the company.

"One day, Missy Quarry at Select-O-Hits said, 'Do you know Emma Wilson?' I told her I knew who Emma was, of course. She said, 'You two ought to talk.'"

Wyze reached out, and a WhatsApp chat followed on 4 September. The chemistry was instant.

"It felt like talking to someone I had known all my life," he recalls. "At some point, I said I was going to do some Christmas music and asked if she might be interested. She told me she would be on a little tour of the Mid South in late September, and she had exactly one free day."

That day was 25 September. Wyze promised to find a studio. Behind the scenes, he and long-time collaborator Ralph Carter began sketching a new duet, while Select-O-Hits set about opening some very special doors.

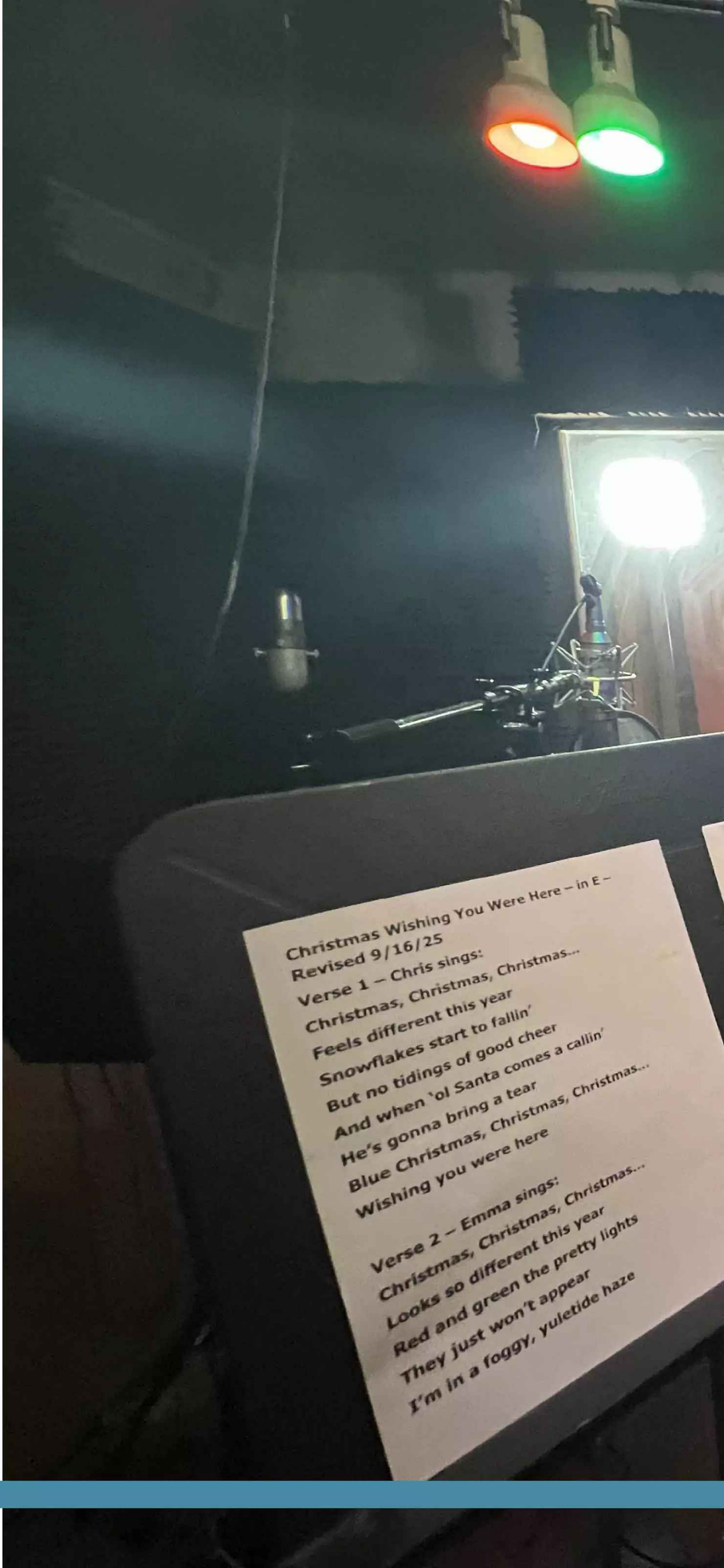
ROYAL STUDIOS AND THE HIGH RHYTHM SECTION

A phone call from Johnny Phillips to Boo Mitchell at Royal Studios in Memphis made the rest possible.

"Boo looked at the calendar and said, 'The only day I have free in the next month is 25 September.' I told him I would take it," Wyze laughs.

Royal Studios is hallowed ground. Built originally as a cinema in 1915 and converted in the 1950s, it has recorded Buddy Guy, Bobby Bland, Ike and Tina Turner, Chuck Berry, Robert Cray, Cedric Burnside, and many more. The famous Hi Rhythm section is its heartbeat.

"When we walked in, it was like stepping into history," Wyze says. "Reverend Charles Hodges was on Hammond organ, Leroy Hodges on bass, Archie Turner on Wurlitzer piano, Steve Potts on drums,

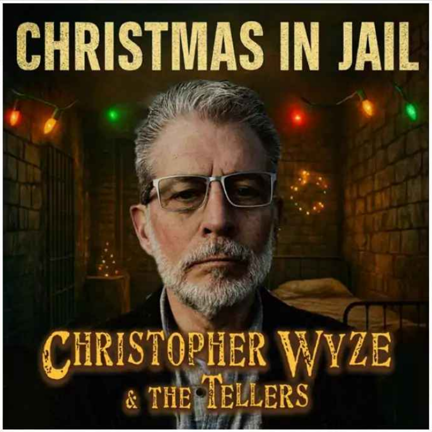


Christmas Wishing You Were Here – in E –
Revised 9/16/25
Verse 1 – Chris sings:
Christmas, Christmas, Christmas...
Feels different this year
Snowflakes start to fallin'
But no tidings of good cheer
And when `ol Santa comes a callin'
He's gonna bring a tear
Blue Christmas, Christmas, Christmas...
Wishing you were here

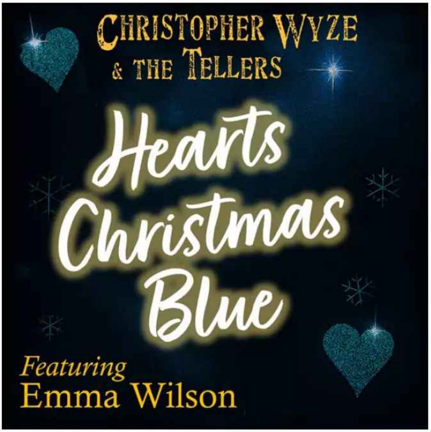
Verse 2 – Emma sings:
Christmas, Christmas, Christmas...
Looks so different this year
Red and green the pretty lights
They just won't appear
I'm in a foggy, yuletide haze

EXIT
Clouds surround me...far and near
Blue Christmas, Christmas, Christmas
Wishing you were here
Bridge...(C/E take turns):
C: If I had another chance...at a Christmas-time romance
C: Baby...I would try once more with you
E: And I'm here sitting by my phone...sittin' all alone
E: Wishing that our love was not through
Solo – over the verse
Bridge...(C/E take turns):
C: If I had another chance...at a Christmas-time romance
C: Baby...I would try once more with you

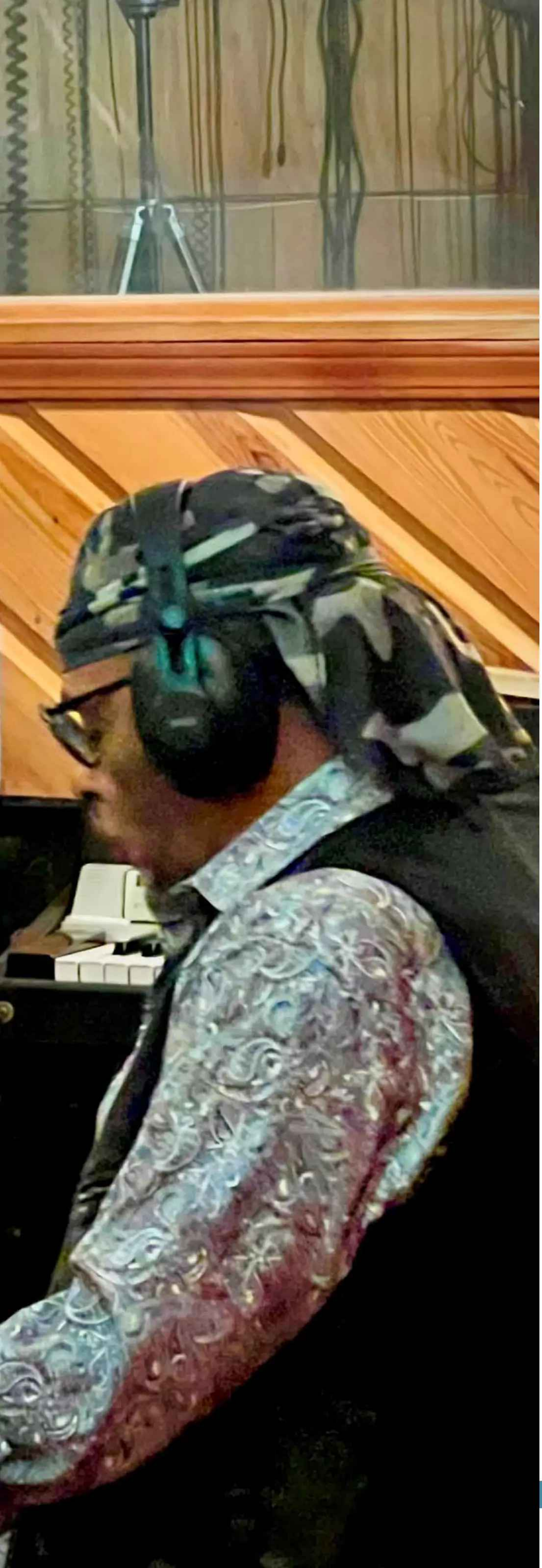
LISTEN/WATCH HERE


CHRISTMAS IN JAIL
CHRISTOPHER WYZE
& THE TELLERS

ALL-NEW ARRANGEMENT OF THE 1929 LEROY CARR – SCRAPPER BLACKWELL CLASSIC


CHRISTOPHER WYZE
& THE TELLERS
Hearts Christmas Blue
Featuring
Emma Wilson

A BRAND-NEW CHRISTMAS BLUES DUET – CHRISTOPHER WYZE AND EMMA WILSON



and Lena Beach, a fantastic young guitarist they have taken under their wing. These guys have played with Rod Stewart, Joe Cocker, Boz Scaggs, all sorts of people.

"They could have been distant or intimidating, but they were the opposite: kind, supportive, and completely focused on making great music. They made me feel like we were all one band."

Emma and Christopher met in person for the first time that morning in a Memphis hotel lobby. By midday, they were in Royal Studios, working live with the band and producer Boo Mitchell.

"Boo put us opposite each other in the vocal booth so we could sing to each other," Wyze says. "We had been writing with Ralph over email and WhatsApp, trying to give it an old school feel, something that could have been written in the 40s or 50s. Emma has that voice that just makes it work. I felt like the straight man in the song; she was all the flavour."

Filmmaker Coop Cooper, fresh from shooting in Memphis the night before, captured the whole session on camera, adding a visual document to the music.

REIMAGINING CHRISTMAS IN JAIL

If the original duet was built from scratch in a hurry, the second track, Christmas in Jail (Ain't That a Pain), was a labour of long-term fascination.

"The song is very unusual," Wyze says. "The way Carr and Blackwell perform it is quite complex. The first few times I heard it, I thought, I do not know if I can even sing that. There are no drums, just piano and guitar, and the feel is unlike anything else from the 1920s."

The song itself was written by Floyd Thompson and J. E. Guernsey rather than Carr and Blackwell, something Wyze only confirmed after digging through old credits.

"I tried to find out more about Floyd Thompson and got nowhere," he admits. "It is like he never existed. That happens a lot with early blues; people dispute who really wrote what. In a way, it makes the songs even more mysterious."

For their version, Wyze and the band reshaped the structure slightly, moved some lyrics around, and trimmed a couple of lines that did not sit right for a modern cut.

"The main thing was to capture the spirit and make it playable in a single day," he says. "We were recording live. Leroy Hodges came up with this bass groove that drove the song. At one point, I asked him to play it again so I could hear what he was going to do, and he said, 'I have no idea what I am going to play, I will get to it when I get to it.' That is how natural it is for him.

"I played harmonica parts I had never played before. Everyone was listening to each other more than looking. It felt like the song was just flowing out of the room."

KEEPING THE BLUES ALIVE, ONE CONNECTION AT A TIME

Many threads run through Wyze's story: the historical influence of Leroy Carr and Scrapper Blackwell in Indianapolis, the legacy of Sam Phillips, the ongoing work of Johnny Phillips and Select-O-Hits, the living history of Royal Studios and the Hi Rhythm section, and the modern energy of artists such as Emma Wilson and Christone "Kingfish" Ingram.

Wyze recently presented at the Josie Music Awards at the Grand Ole Opry House in Nashville, another experience that underlined how strong the independent scene is.

"It is for independent artists of all genres," he explains. "They pack the Opry, every seat. Being backstage, presenting awards, talking to musicians from jazz, blues, country, everything, it was great. I enjoy being on stage with a microphone in my hand."

Yet for all the industry machinery, he keeps coming back to the way the blues connects people in a very direct way.

"Our band has only played three shows," he says. "At one of them in Indianapolis, a couple came up afterwards and said they had driven from South Carolina, twelve or thirteen hours, just to see us. They had found us online, followed us on Facebook, and wanted to hear the songs live.

"That kind of thing happens in blues. The venues are smaller, the audiences know the original songs, and they feel part of it. It is not glitz and glamour; it is a community. The listeners are as much a part of keeping the blues alive as the musicians."

As Christmas approaches, Wyze is proud to be adding his own small chapter to the long history of festive blues songs.

"The blues have always had space for joy and sorrow at the same time," he says. "Christmas can be exactly like that. If these songs reach people and give them something real to hold on to over the holidays, then all that Memphis magic was worth it."

ROYAL
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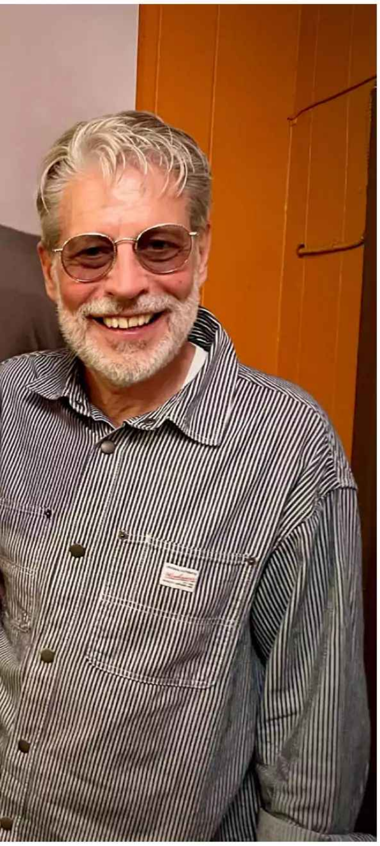
MEMPHIS SOUND
Block Party



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TAKE ME TO THE RIVER

Where do you start with this awesome lady? Absolute blues and soul royalty, Carla Thomas may be in her eighties now but her memory is undimmed and her astonishing vocals remain absolutely perfectly pitched and powerful. Known as the Queen of Soul, this Memphis-based great is, of course, part of a true Memphis musical dynasty.

Iain Patience Chris Griffiths

Father the late, great Rufus Thomas of 'Walking the Dog; and many more-fame, sister Vaneese, a leading modern blues-soul great and brother Marvel.

On an all-too-rare visit to the UK and Europe recently Carla fronted the fabulous Take Me To The River events which included a truly superb night of fabulous music at London's Barbican Centre in July, Blues Matters managed to catch-up with this tireless titan for a chat that covered much of her history and her sheer delight at being back on the road for UK and European audiences.

Featuring the Queen of Memphis Soul STAX legend Carla Thomas, The Legendary Hi Rhythm Section (he band behind 27 Gold and Platinum Records in a row, including all of Al Green's classics) along with vocalist Jerome Chism, GRAMMY winner Boo Mitchell (son of Willie Mitchell) and GRAMMY winner Martin Shore.

"It's very important and I don't want to take away from the simple enjoyment of it all because there's still many younger people who love the music but are maybe not so familiar with Stax Records. So in the United States many do know about Stax and its place but I think it's important to get out on the road to different countries to keep it alive and keep it in mind. Especially London, where it was popular a long time ago and it allows us to spread that legacy all over Europe. "

"I must give my appreciation to everybody who helps with it, spreading the word. In some ways we all owe so much to London – and the Beatles who became huge and loved the Stax soud – and they all helped bring it back over here to the USA and that allowed us to get known and make it over there to London and Europe! The Take Me to the River project is all about keeping and promoting our legacy not just overseas but back home here in cities in America. It helps young people who are playing other music get familiar with our music. "

When I suggest she's little short of being a true Living Legend' nowadays, Carla laughs and quips: "I'm sure glad that I'm still a Living legend! Praise be to almighty God!"

Chucking her sister, Vaneese, into the mix, Carla smiles and says: "She's coming along real well, sure coming along. She's doing well now and carrying it on. She also has a real Beale Street, Memphis legacy and now she's also into the

blues round, she'll get more out there than ever before."

"Well, in very beginning before Stax even had a label, they had a personality, an ability to just let people come in and show their talent and music. They never said, 'No', or locked doors or curtailed creativity. And that was why those hit records came out. I mean, Otis came in – (Otis Redding) and played some keys, and sang. The guys at Stax went, 'Wow', and next thing you know he's got a hit record. It was kinda like that; people would come and whoever was down there would have this open-door policy to just listen to people and let them just come in and work to create something that hit the mind and the heart, all was so, so important. I believe it was that policy, openness and creativity welcomed every time, that made Stax such a great label."

"Whatever the future holds out, take it!"

"They allowed and helped with creativity. There would be times when we'd be working in the studio all night long and Stax just allowed that to happen. We could just come in, say, sit down and write, maybe work with whoever was there, a guitarist, a keys guy, whoever, close down and return the following night and pick up again where we sort of left off! That policy of open-door, letting us all in to listen and hear what we could do, all made Stax such a great label. It was actually Atlantic for four or five years, so Atlantic really helped promote the music back then and Stax grew out of that. "

"There was a feeling of real camaraderie, we all felt we became family! Nobody ran you out, you could just roll in and sit and watch, if that was what you wanted!"

"I mean there was Jerry Wexler, with Atlantic, then Satellite Records which later became Stax, the music was already there, it was happening and being olayed all over the world. I remember being real excited to get a royalty statement from Africa cause it meant the music was out there, everywhere and Jerry Wexler was the biggest distributor we all had!"

"People were enjoying our music and yet lots og great musicians still didn't know what Stax was. Elvis loved the music but then knew nothing about Stax!"

"The Rhythm, the gospel, the lyrics, the horns. I mean, it just got it all," she laughs.

"Back then, you walked down Beale and there'd be a blues bar. You just walked in and played or listened to great music going down. So there were no boundaries, we all got to know each other. We all had a feeling for the music, that's what mattered. We'd have Syl Johnson, Otis, OV, William Bell, Otis Clay, everybody was family! "

"Memphis horns, that sound. You know my father (Rufus Thomas) was one of the first who knew many of those cats; they played with jazz orchestras and the like. They knew what they were doing and had real swing and rhythm baked right in! My father was a Beale Street MC. He played all the Memphis clubs and he knew all the black musicians and was a a known figure too before he had any hit records of his own."

"He'd get me up to sing, and I'd just do it, go right ahead. But he knew everybody in Memphis back then. Even before 'Walking the Dog', he was out there working Beale Street with all those great horn players, maybe trumpet, baritone sax, all that sound going on. Then all those other labels began taking an interest, Columbia, Atlantic, it all grew out of that time. And around then, the horns just got bigger and bigger. I mean, sometimes there'd be maybe six or seven horns there in the studio. Wow, that sound! Of course, a lot of those men they taught school, so they couldn't travel. They'd play on sessions but never travel. So a lot of horn players, like John Nixon and others , like the Mar-Kays, so there was a whole bunch of folk called the Memphis Horns. And the Hi-Rhythm is part of that same thing, that old-school soul and rhythm and blues scene. They'd all share the session work."

"Just to be able to travel overseas and play your own songs, was amazing. The first place when I was about 17 or 18 years old, I went with a German interpreter to help out! I thought I'd be playing maybe an air base or something but, no, I was on national German TV. I was doing all this stuff, Bandstand etc, at such a young age. I was doing these overseas tours before I went to London, which was the real place to be back then!"

"When I hit London, I went with Otis (Redding) in 1965. I'd first been over in Europe in '61, so a few years later before London. Now that I'm older I realise just how much I was a pioneer of the Stax music sound. At the time, I was still in college while doing all this travelling! "

"I went to Nashville too. I love Nashville. I grew up listening to lots of different music; country music was always part of that too. I thought maybe we should be pushing more into that country music but it was hard back in them days of segregation. I mean, a black girl doing country music! But I was in a group and I sang all them Brenda Lee songs but I went a different route with Atlantic, they could get us all over the world. "

"It's amazing to be with the Hi Rhythm Section again. I've been with Booker T and the MGs for so long . First it was Hi, then Hi Rhythm – the whole label was Hi.So I toured with Willie Mitchell back when he was an artist not just a producer, long before the Al Green story."

"So now it's like a second go round with a group that shared all that Memphis Horns stuff so when they called me and asked if I'd take part in that Take Me to the River educational project, I said yes! I lived out in LA and taught for a while but moved back and I actually taught music, the legacy, to younger people before the Stax Academy even. I was a teacher, I was a player and singer, whatever I could be, you know. An advocate for Memphis music."

"It's all about sharing. I knew Petula Clarke and Dusty Springfield . I actually cut one of Dusty's songs, All I See is You, way back. I remember working with Otis Clay. We were at a festival – I just happened to be in Chicago - and he called me up to play with him. People thought it was from a recording at then but it wasn't though he did put it out later from the sound desk tapes – If I Could Reach Out and Help Somebody. Looking back, I always got on real well with Otis Redding and we just clicked, and I always wanted to cut with Al Green but it just never happened, I don't know why!"

Closing our meeting, I ask what she thinks the future holds, if not for her but new, young musicians in the genre:

"Whatever the future holds out, take it! I love being able to still do it, I love that good news feeling and getting it out still at my age all over the world. That's a good feeling."

Finally, I remind her of the evening of blistering soul music at London's Barbican Centre in July and the London guitarist who was honoured and delighted to join the onstage fun in his home town, Oli Mississippi MacDonald:

"He's really great, a cool player. He just has it, he gets it, the sound, the feeling, the legacy is wrapped up in him and his playing. After the gig, we had a reception, and we talked together for hours! He was just so excited to be part of it all. And he was real welcome and great to play with. He was a part of what it's all about, the sharing and letting us hear how he interpreted our sound! "

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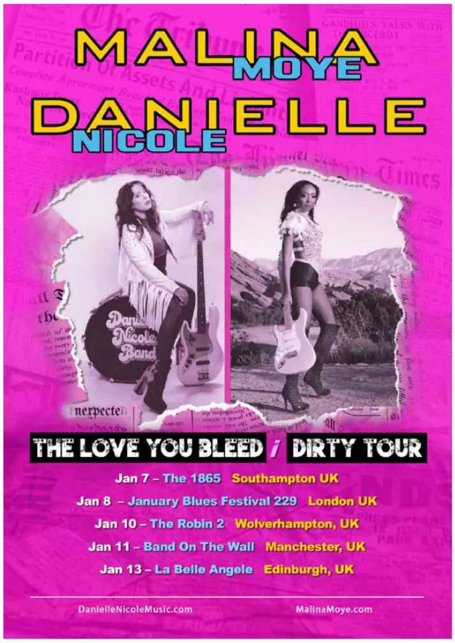

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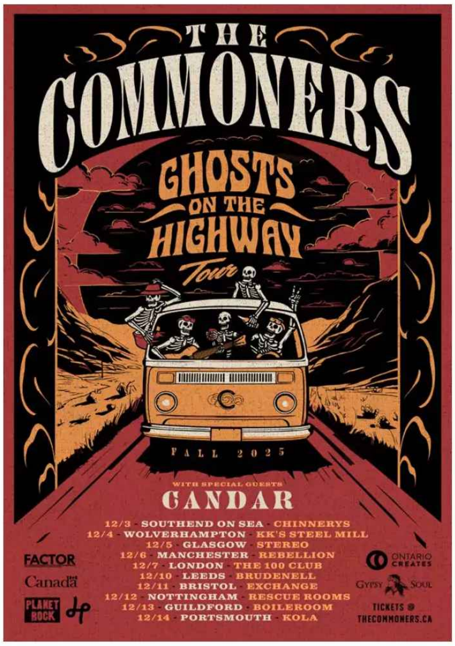

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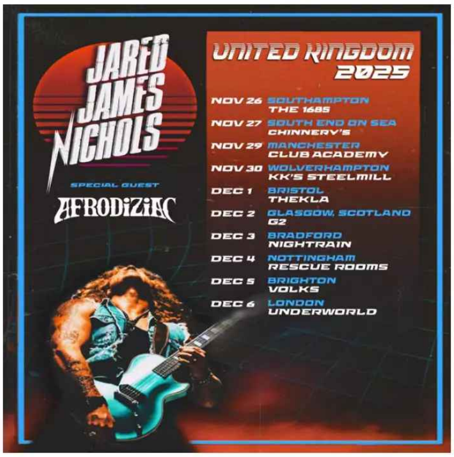

JARED JAMES NICHOLS

SPECIAL GUEST

AFRODIZIAC

UNITED KINGDOM 2025

NOV 26 SOUTHAMPTON
THE 1865

NOV 27 SOUTH END ON SEA
CHINNERY'S

NOV 29 MANCHESTER
CLUB ACADEMY

NOV 30 WOLVERHAMPTON
KK'S STEELMILL

DEC 1 BRISTOL
THEKLA

DEC 2 GLASGOW, SCOTLAND
G2

DEC 3 BRADFORD
NIGHTRAIN

DEC 4 NOTTINGHAM
RESCUE ROOMS

DEC 5 BRIGHTON
VOLKS

DEC 6 LONDON
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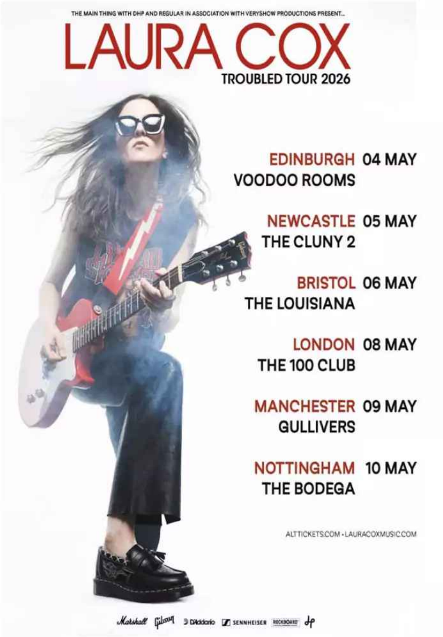

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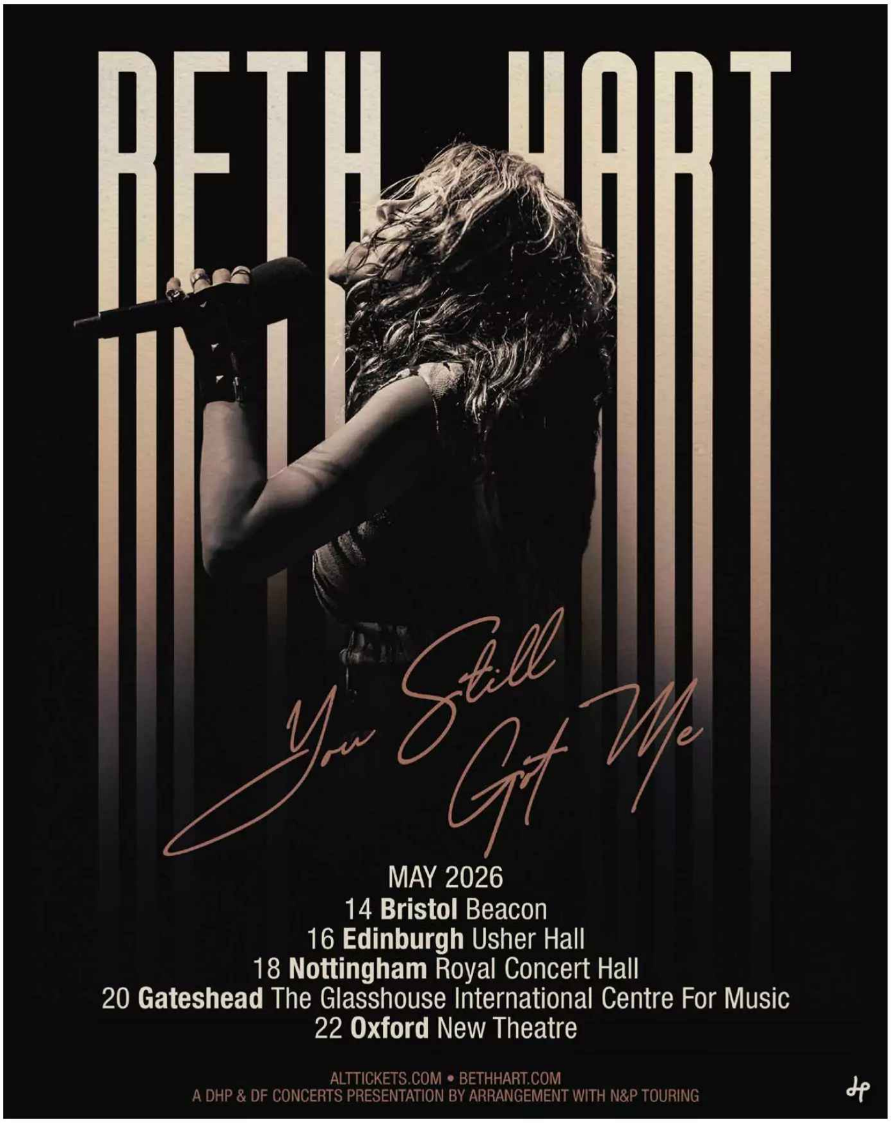

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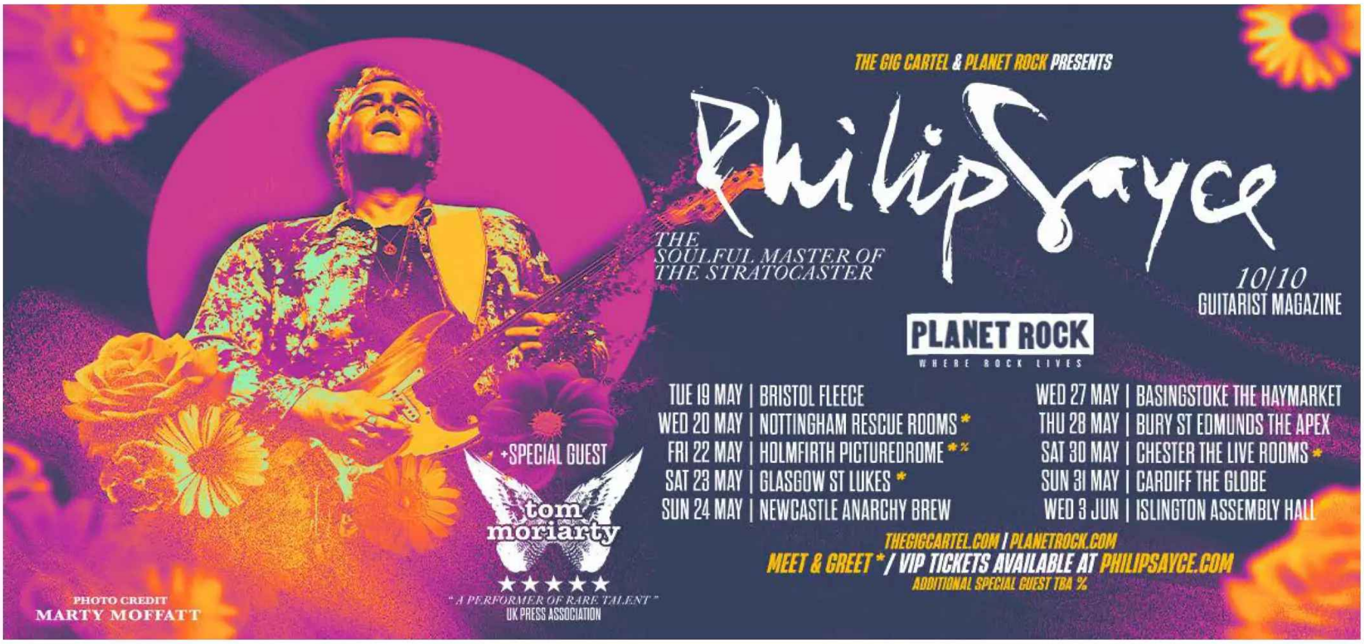

THE GIG CARTEL & PLANET ROCK PRESENTS

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10/10
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PLANET ROCK
WHERE ROCK LIVES

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WED 20 MAY | NOTTINGHAM RESCUE ROOMS *
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SAT 23 MAY | GLASGOW ST LUKES *
SUN 24 MAY | NEWCASTLE ANARCHY BREW
WED 27 MAY | BASINGSTOKE THE HAYMARKET
THU 28 MAY | BURY ST EDMUNDS THE APEX
SAT 30 MAY | CHESTER THE LIVE ROOMS *
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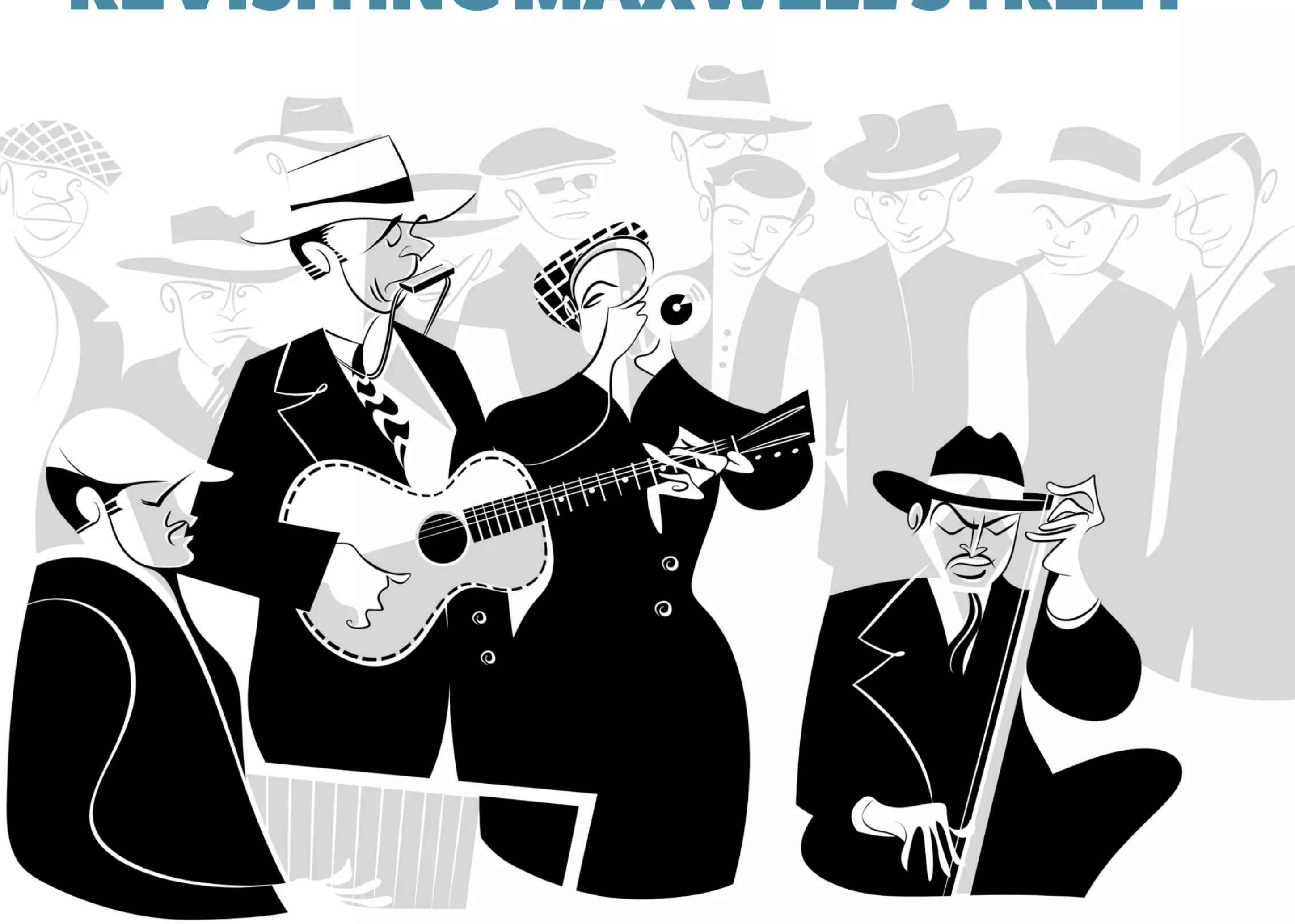
MARTY MOFFATT

The Illustrated Blues Of Brian Kramer

REVISITING MAXWELL STREET



Brian Kramer 18-11-2

Yes, I'd like that very much. Time machine please & set dial to late 1950s Chicago Maxwell Street Sunday Market! I've dreamed of this (mostly in B & W) since I'm a kid when I stumbled across the album Robert Nighthawk; Live On Maxwell Street. You could feel it, you could taste it, you could smell it.

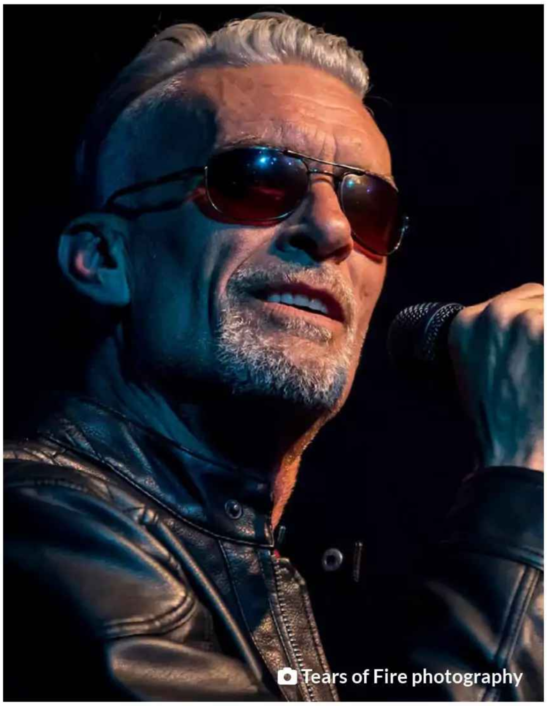
Most importantly; you could HEAR it.

We've read the interviews; Muddy Waters, Walter Horton, Howlin' Wolf, Earl Hooker, Nighthawk and many Chicago legends would have some neighbors feed long extension chords out the window of apartment buildings one story up or so, onto the street to get juice for the amps to play for the thick crowds during the bustling Sunday market, stalls lining the long streets filled with everything imaginable.

There were also countless lesser to unknown (far as we know) musicians who banded together and made some sweet noise; Blues, Country, Gospel. Electric, acoustic, youth, elders...

This depiction is for those unsung Maxwell St. heroes. Washboard, acoustic guitar, one-string basin stick bass, trumpet & a very focused, audience.

Graham Deeboy - 1963 - 2025


Tears of Fire photography

"What can I say about Deeboy...

We crossed paths for the first time nearly 12 years ago when you joined Climax Blues Band.

You swept into the rehearsal room like a fresh wind, and from day one, your energy and professionalism shone through, a dream to behold, full of ideas and refreshing energy. Full on 100% and quite rightly expected the same in return from everyone around you.

Our relationship blossomed. I struggled to keep up with you at times, but it was nothing but good fun.

You had your 'down' moments like most musicians, but it was never for very long, and up you bounced.

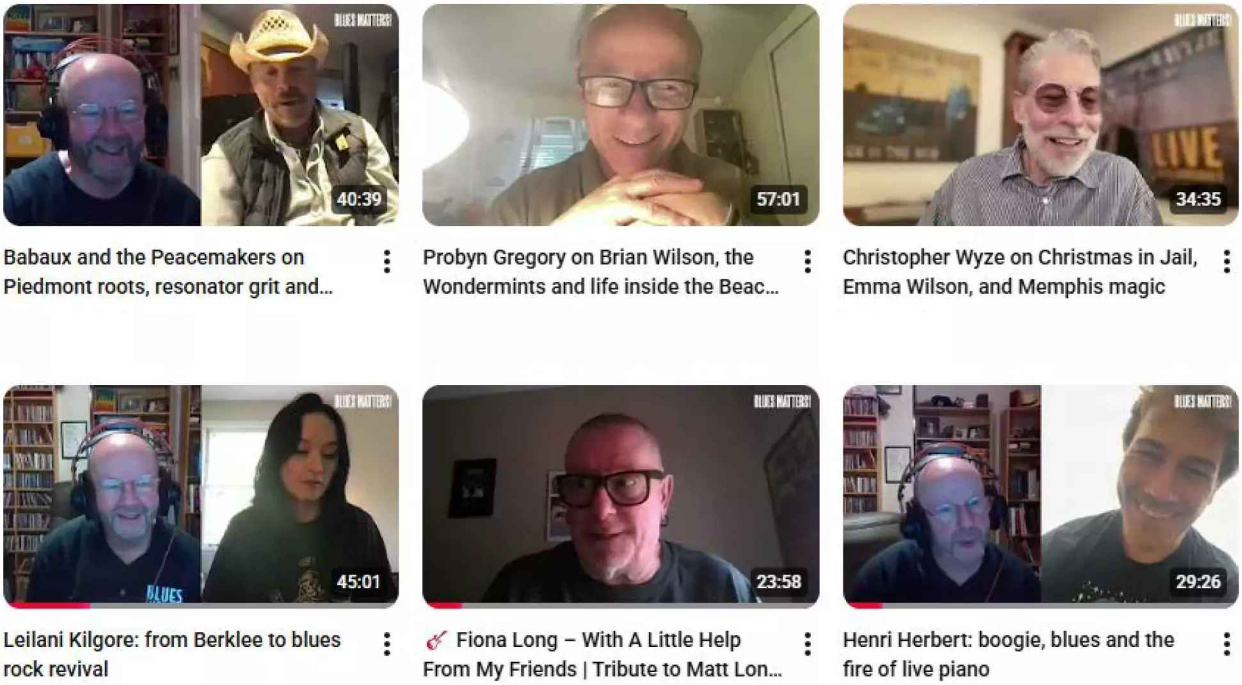
Such a fabulous Voice and a great songwriter, after many road miles /airmiles travelling, you were the true pro "The Show Goes On" .

I loved being in your company and presence, my friend. I will miss you, we spent some lovely times together. I will never forget you.

We recorded an album together of beautiful music, "Hands Of Time," which will stand alone in the history of Climax Blues Band as a testament to your great talent.
Thank You, Sir, for everything
RIP"

George Glover, Climax Blues Band

BLUES MATTERS! ON YouTube



Babaux and the Peacemakers on Piedmont roots, resonator grit and...

Probyn Gregory on Brian Wilson, the Wondermints and life inside the Beac...

Christopher Wyze on Christmas in Jail, Emma Wilson, and Memphis magic

Leilani Kilgore: from Berklee to blues rock revival

🎸 Fiona Long – With A Little Help From My Friends | Tribute to Matt Lon...

Henri Herbert: boogie, blues and the fire of live piano

DANCE TO THE RHYTHM

ANA POPOVIC

Ana Popovic has never been an artist content to sit still. Over three decades she has carved out a global reputation as one of the most fearless, forward-driving guitarists and bandleaders in the modern blues landscape. Her new album, Dance to the Rhythm, marks another bold stride in a career defined by constant movement, reinvention and emotional honesty.

Iain Patience Martin Sarovski

With more than ten albums to her credit, and a live reputation that spans the USA, Europe and beyond, she is an artist whose work continually deepens. This latest release, her follow up to the acclaimed Power in 2023, draws from funk, soul, rock and of course the blues that anchors everything she touches. It is an album shaped by life experience, creative risk-taking and Popovic's own determination to celebrate living itself.

When we finally connect, she is enjoying a rare pause at home on the USA's west coast, juggling interviews, motherhood and recovery time between tours. Speaking with her means speaking with someone who is always balancing two worlds: the intensity of life on the road and the grounded reality of raising a family. The energy of both worlds feeds directly into the music.

MEMORIES, ROOTS AND A LIFE LIVED ON THE MOVE

We begin by recalling a brief meeting years ago at the sensational Brezoi-Valcea Open Air Blues Festival in Romania. Her face lights up as she remembers. The festival sits not far from her own cultural heritage. Born in Belgrade, she carries Serbian roots proudly, and she has always held a close connection to the European blues scene she emerged from before breaking into the American market.

Her touring life today is relentless. France, Belgium, the Netherlands, the USA, festivals, theatres, clubs. Yet she retains a clear sense of place and community. She speaks warmly about the people she met on that tour, the environments that inspire her and the constant learning she takes from travelling.

"It's been a crazy schedule," she laughs, "but a good one. We had so many sold-out shows in France. People came ready to dance, ready to hear the new sound, and it felt so good to see that energy. We sold so much merch on that run. I was blown away."

The joy in her voice is unmistakable. She is an artist who thrives in front of people, exchanging energy, testing new ideas and receiving instant feedback. Every tour changes her. Every country influences her. All of that pours into the writing of Dance to the Rhythm.

CRAFTING A NEW MUSICAL IDENTITY

The question everyone asks is whether the new album is a departure. Ana is clear.

"It's connected to what I've always done. There is always blues in there. But I always

Anna Popovic

> **“I wanted something super catchy. Something people couldn’t resist.”**

search for new ways to express it. I don't want to recycle myself. After more than twenty years of albums and touring, you need something fresh, something more. The audience tells you instantly whether you are moving forward."

She describes Dance to the Rhythm as a record built on intention. She wanted music that people could not help but move to. She wanted groove, pulse and energy. She wanted to bring back the joy of dancing without abandoning her guitar identity.

"I love to go out dancing. But I always think: where is that guitar? So I wanted music that combines both. Only two tracks on the album are pure dance songs, but the others have that Santana groove, that rhythmic feel. It's still blues guitar, still my sound, but placed inside something that feels irresistible."

STRENGTH THROUGH ADVERSITY

The emotional roots of the album run deep.

Power, her previous release, was recorded while undergoing chemotherapy. It was a record of determination and uplift. Dance to the Rhythm continues that journey.

“Power was about survival and strength. This one is about celebrating life. Dancing despite everything. Appreciating joy. Being able to celebrate what you have. I am lucky. I love music. I love being a musician. That’s the hidden message.”

She talks openly about this personal journey. Overcoming adversity. Finding light. Healing through work. The music reflects that internal movement.

“People say I’m doing something different, but it’s always blues guitar. The arrangements change, the groove changes, but the heart of it remains blues.”

WRITING WITH HONESTY AND INTENTION

Popovic’s son recently asked if she samples ideas from other songs to build new work.

“No,” she told him. “We don’t steal from anyone. Inspiration comes from the air we breathe, from the music we love and the message we want to send.”

This speaks to her artistic integrity. She emphasises that every record stands on a foundation of lived experience, emotional truth and instinct.

COVERING PAUL SIMON

Among the ten tracks is one bold cover: Paul Simon’s 50 Ways to Leave Your Lover. Popovic’s rendition takes the melody and lyric and places them into a warm, funky, soulful pocket that still feels distinctly hers.

“It is such a fabulous track. I was going through a divorce but in a positive way. No drama. No damage to the family. And that song felt like exactly what I needed to say. It came to me like an inner voice.”

MUSICALLY, THE SONG LET HER STRETCH OUT

“I love songs with different sections. You can move into gospel influences, shift tempos. But you still have to respect the original. People love it. As soon as I play the intro, they cheer. They know where it’s going.”

When asked about the solo, she taps her heart. “It comes from here.”

MUSIC WITH A MESSAGE

Two songs from the album have had particular impact in Europe: Sisters & Brothers and Solution.

“Sisters & Brothers is about unity. We need that. Climate, politics, conflict, division. The planet needs love. The audience feels that message. And Solution has one of my favourite solos. One take. Pure inspiration.”

GEAR, GUITARS AND LIVE SOUND

Popovic uses her new Fender Stratocaster throughout the album.

“Foggy is on everything. My ’64 Strat is still my workhorse for blues. And the ’57 Strat is for slow blues. It brings a soulful, gospel vibe. You have to honour those slow blues. They need emotion and that guitar gives it.”

Her live band in the USA is an impressive eleven-piece ensemble.
“It changes the whole experience. Three backing singers, drums, percussion, horns. It’s like the Tedeschi Trucks Band. Full sound. My musicians rehearse everything before we hit the road. They’re amazing.”

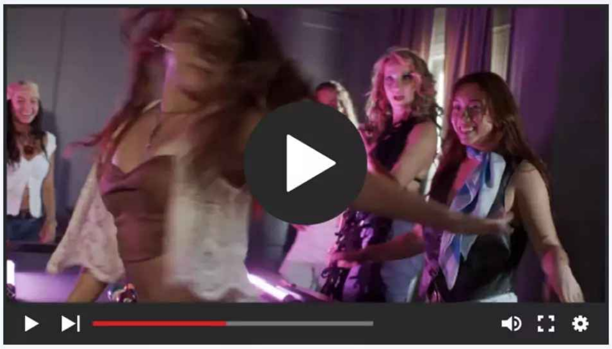
She tours with a slimmer six-piece configuration too, including players from London and Italy.

INFLUENCES AND FOUNDATIONS

Ana’s influences include some of the greatest players in guitar history.

“Hendrix, Stevie Ray, Albert King, Albert Collins, Buddy Guy. The giants. And I love that Detroit sound. Those musicians, that soul vibe, it shaped so much of what I do.”

She speaks about the importance of listening not only to guitarists but to vocalists, horn players, old soul records, and even music outside the blues sphere.



A RECORD TWO YEARS IN THE MAKING

The creation of Dance to the Rhythm stretched across two years.

“I don’t rush. I have my own studio in Redondo Beach, so I can pace myself. Five or six hours a day. Then I stop. I go home. I make dinner for the kids. I need balance. Recording ten hours straight isn’t for me.”

This approach, she says, gives the album clarity and intention. Every song has room to breathe.

LOOKING AHEAD: TOURING, EUROPE AND THE UK

The touring calendar for 2025 is already filling up.

“I really hope to come to the UK soon. I love the audiences there. I hope this new album gets attention. I’m doing Europe again in March and later in the year. But I want more UK shows. That’s the plan.”

Popovic’s ambition remains strong, but her focus is clear: connection, energy, creativity and bringing joy into the room.

“I need balance. Recording ten hours straight isn’t for me”

At 80, New Yorker Blue Lou Marini is still grooving after all these years

Abbe Sparks Arnie Goodman

New York based "Blue" Lou Marini is one of the world's most prolific musical luminaries. Eighty years young, "His Blueness", as he is often called, is still one of the most in-demand session horn players on saxophone, flute and clarinet. He is a master of many styles and instruments, equally at home on soprano, alto, tenor and baritone saxes, piccolo, flute, alto flute, bass flute and clarinet.

Solo artist, arranger and composer can also be added to his credits, along with extensive work in film, television shows and specials. Of course, Marini is best known to many for his role in The Blues Brothers films, where he played "Blue Lou". He has been an original member of The Blues Brothers Band since 1978 and often jokes that it is his greatest part-time gig. To call Lou Marini a legend feels like an understatement. Alongside his Blues Brothers work, he has been a member of the Saturday Night Live Band, Blood, Sweat & Tears, and James Taylor's band for 25 years, still touring with the latter. He has played on hundreds of albums, many of them platinum sellers. As a cultural icon, he has recorded with Eric Clapton, Aretha Franklin, Tony Bennett, Stevie Wonder, Diana Ross, Lou Reed, Frank Zappa, Aerosmith and The Rolling Stones, to name only a few. You get the picture.

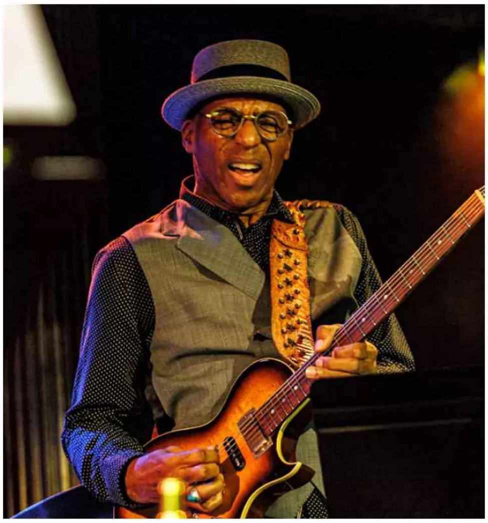
NO STOPPING HIS BLUENESS

Marini is known for his chameleon-like adaptability, able to imagine and perform inventive ideas in blues, jazz, rock and even classical settings. In 2025 alone he released three albums that show different sides of his talent and creativity.

The most recent, Point of View, released in August, is a collaborative jazz album with GRAMMY Award-winning pianist, composer and arranger Steve Feifke, with Blue Lou on sax. Earlier in the year he released Out of the Blue, a big band album of his own compositions.

In February came We Like to Groove, his first recorded collaboration with Barcelona pianist and composer Lluis Coloma. The CD blends blues, boogie-woogie and jazz, mixing original material with fresh takes on classics such as Mona Lisa and Rockin' Robin.

CUTTING ROOM



CUTTING ROOM

In November the pair brought the album to life on stage at the iconic New York venue The Cutting Room. It was clear from the first notes that everyone on stage was in a New York state of mind, showcasing energy and musicality at the highest level. Marini's sultry, seductive lines on sax and clarinet, paired with Coloma's rolling boogie-woogie piano, completely enraptured the crowd. As is often the case, it was a real treat to hear His Blueness step up to the microphone and sing, which he did more than once during the evening.

The gig also underlined the remarkable chemistry between Coloma and Marini, something that only amplified the already electrified Cutting Room audience. The band was completed by Zev Katz on bass, Chris Parker on drums and Keith Robinson on guitar. It was one of those classic New York nights that people will talk about for a long time.

Coloma and Marini first met in Spain in 2022 at Café Central in Madrid, where Marini was immediately struck by the sound of Coloma's band. They began playing together soon afterwards, which led to their joint project and eventually the release of We Like to Groove.

Lou Marini cites Gil Evans, Bob Brookmeyer, Thad Jones and Don Ellis as some of his musical heroes, and their influence can clearly be heard in his writing and arrangements.

BLUES IN NEW YORK

From late October through November, New York City and the wider tri-state area continued to host outstanding blues talent. Highlights included Ronnie Baker Brooks and Anthony Gomes at The Iridium, Long Island favourites Joe Louis, Jimmy Bennett, Mario Staiano and Kerry Kearney at a Sunday afternoon jam at Katie's of Smithtown, and John Primer at Terra Blues in the Village.

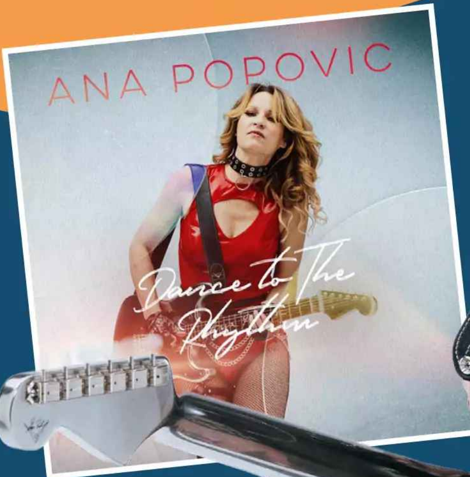
To all our readers, we wish you happy holidays filled with great blues in any state of mind. The new year already looks promising, with an influx of emerging artists, fan favourites and top-tier blues acts set to roll through in a true New York state of mind. Happy New Year.

BIG BLUES REVIEWS

ANA POPOVIC

DANCE TO THE RHYTHM

Electric Heel Records



Ana Popovic's Dance to the Rhythm feels like a celebration of groove, colour and confidence. The record leans into vibrant rhythms and melodic hooks, with Popovic's guitar work cutting cleanly through arrangements that are full of movement and energy. The opening tracks set a tone that is upbeat and playful, built around tight musicianship and her unmistakable touch on the fretboard. It is clear she approached this album with a desire to create something that lifts the mood and invites the listener to join in the momentum. Her reimagining of 50 Ways to Leave Your Lover stands out as one of the most engaging moments. Rather than simply recreating a well known song, she reshapes it with a fresh rhythmic feel and finishes with a fiery solo that gives the track its own personality within the album. It fits naturally alongside her original material, which often carries the same mix of polish and spontaneity.
Across the record she blends elements of blues, funk and soul in a way that feels natural rather than forced. There are songs driven by swaggering grooves, others with a smoother, more reflective tone, and plenty of moments where the guitar steps forward to take the lead. Even the quieter tracks have a sense of intention behind them, showing she can shift gears without losing character. What gives the album its charm is the balance between precision and looseness. You can hear the discipline in the arrangements, but you can also sense the enjoyment in the performances. Nothing feels overworked. Instead, it comes across as a confident artist enjoying the freedom to explore different textures and rhythms while keeping her core sound intact.
For listeners who have followed Popovic over the years, Dance to the Rhythm feels like a natural yet exciting step forward. It showcases her ability to evolve while staying recognisable, and it carries an infectious spirit that makes it easy to return to. It is a lively, confident set of songs that show her continuing to grow while keeping the fun at the heart of her music.

IAIN PATIENCE

EXPLORE

3 MILE SHOUT

ROUND WE GO

Who Said That

I like the sound and feel of this new album, despite the difficulty of actually placing the work solely within the world of Blues. There is no doubt that there are elements of the Blues to be explored here, for example on the track Trouble, but there is also so much more. Take the instrumental Ocean Of Storms with its more than passing nod to Pink Floyd. Café De Los Muertos has real Jazz overtones. It could be argued that this, fundamentally trio of talented musicians, should focus a bit more. However to do so is to miss the whole point which is that were one to seek only the comfort of the familiar then nothing would change and you end up with complacency and ultimately boredom and stagnation. That would never be acceptable, boundaries have to be pushed, and ears opened to differences. So, oddly enough for the second time in a short period, I am kind of reminded of Dave Alvin, James McMurtry and Leonard Cohen in certain respects as the vocals are being sort of spoken on the tracks. The album comprises ten tracks built around the three core band members. You will find yourself returning to Round We Go time and again, as it becomes more familiar. Therein lies its strength as it draws you back almost as if you have been hooked by those variances.

GRAEME SCOTT

BRIAN WILSON

LIVE AT THE ROXY THEATRE (EXPANDED EDITION, 2025)

Oglio Entertainment

Listening to Live at the Roxy Theatre feels like watching a humble genius gently reintroduce himself to the world. Captured over two nights in April 2000 at Los Angeles' intimate Roxy Theatre, this recording marked Brian Wilson's first full solo outing of an artist cautiously stepping out from behind the legend to reconnect with his own songs. Backed by a stellar ensemble that includes members of The Wondermints, Wilson's band

BABAUX
AND THE
PEACEMAKERS
KEEP BOTH HANDS ON THE WHEEL

BABAUX & THE PEACEMAKERS

KEEP BOTH HANDS ON THE WHEEL

Guitar One Records

On their new release, Babaux and The Peacemakers deliver a roots-rock blast that sits firmly in the blues camp while refusing to be pinned down. From the opening grooves of Steal Your Love you're met with a resonator guitar growl and a vocal delivery that's equal parts gravel and soul not a straight blues lament but something more expansive. The album clocks in at around 36 minutes across nine songs, making it lean and potent. It's their first outing on the Guitar One Records label and shows the band moving into looser, more textured territory: slide and dobro interplay, Hammond B3 colourings, a vocal that lets roughness breathe. Highlights include Take The Hand Given three minutes of dynamic tension, pocket groove shifting from whisper to roar a masterclass in restraint and release. Then there's Hardly Living, which finds vocalist Babaux leaning into a raspy timbre that feels lived-in and authentic. What sets this album apart is its comfortable home between the Mississippi delta and the swamps of the South, yet with an unmistakable Californian or Laurel Canyon aesthetic in the songwriting. The band wears its influences whether, blues, Southern rock, Americana, but never becomes a tribute act. Instead, you get the impression of something genuine, matured, and personal. In short: if you're a blues fan willing to stretch beyond twelve-bar formulas, Keep Both Hands On The Wheel is a fine ride. It's soulful, layered and rooted in tradition yet firmly moving ahead. Highly recommended.

> *soulful, layered and rooted in tradition yet firmly moving ahead*

COLIN CAMPBELL

WATCH ON YOUTUBE

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second nature
NOTHING TO SING

SECOND NATURE

NOTHING TO SING

BRIGHT CARVINGS

You could be forgiven for thinking, I've never heard of this album or this band. Well, neither had I until I received a vinyl copy of the album out of the Blue. Second Nature was an underground Blues band dating back to 1970. They were branded as a similar band to The Groundhogs, Savoy Brown, and Chicken Shack. Now, the bands that I have just mentioned are revered in the world of the late '60s Blues boom. Here is the sad part: Second Nature quite literally fell off the face of the earth. Until now, that is, with the re-release of the vinyl, a limited edition of 227 copies. The band consisted of Tim Jones (Guitar), Tim Richards (Piano), Jim Benson (Vocals), Mark Grainger (Drums), and John Slade (Bass). On the liner notes, Tim Richards mentions that he was still at school during the recording of the album, and within months, the band had split. Side(1) opens with, Easy Man, and I immediately understand why the band was compared with the likes of Chicken Shack and Savoy Brown. This bunch of young guys, in my opinion, could have gone on the bigger things than any of the aforementioned bands, but fate decided to lend a hand. The exquisite play of Tim Jones, coupled with the smoky vocals of Jim Benson, blends so well together, it is a crying shame that nothing else was produced. The title track, Nothing To Sing, is simply sensational. I can think of several artists who would be very proud of writing that. Blues On A Sunday Afternoon puts you in mind of a perfect Sunday mood, listening to brilliant Blues, without a care in the world, a tonic in a song, and we could all do with that at times. It's been a learning curve listening to this album, a short trip down memory lane to what might have been. Wherever these guys are right now, if anybody knows of their whereabouts, please say thank you - bravo!

> *brilliant Blues, without a care in the world, a tonic in a song*

STEPHEN HARRISON

WATCH ON YOUTUBE

VISIT THEIR WEBSITE

recreates his intricate harmonies and textures with remarkable authenticity. The sound is lush yet human, polished but unmistakably live. The setlist is a beautifully curated journey: from sun-kissed Beach Boys staples California Girls, Good Vibrations, to tender deep cuts This Whole World and 'Til I Die and overlooked solo gems like The First Time and This Isn't Love. Wilson's voice, weathered but wise, brings a new poignancy to the material. He may not soar as he once did, but what he delivers in place of range is emotional truth, the phrasing on each line has warmth, gratitude, and a sense of homecoming. Some critics once called the performances "adequate," but that undersells the quiet power of hearing Wilson in control of his catalogue again, surrounded by sympathetic musicians and an adoring audience.The newly remastered 2025 expanded edition adds bonus tracks and sharper sound, reaffirming Live at the Roxy Theatre as more than a live album; it's a document of resilience and rebirth. Not perfection but pure heart. A modest triumph from pop's most delicate architect.

COLIN CAMPBELL

DUFFMUSIQ

STONE COLD

Duffmusiq

Duffmusiq is a Canadian Producer and songwriter who has released five studio albums since his debut in 2017. This latest album sees him putting together a fusion of Blues, Jazz and Soul music which has the benefit of being fronted by a very talented lead vocalist in Jeliz (Jill) Zadeh, who has released several albums in her own right. Besides producing and mixing Duffmusiq has written all the material and plays multiple instruments on the album, although he does have a small rhythm section to complement his talents. The base music is quite heavy with a strong thumping Bass that powers out of the speakers

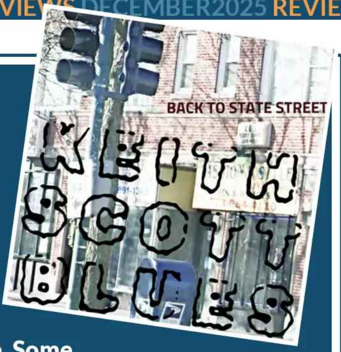
and provides Jeliz with a challenge but her powerful vocals overcome this easily. The music varies from out and out Soul with songs You Got Me Rockin' and Baby Please Don't Go, while the more Bluesy songs are the title song Stone Cold which is a great opener for the album with its driven Rocking Blues format and Best Friend Of Mine another up tempo song that has a punkish feel to it. On these songs and across the album Duffmusiq showcases his classy electric Guitar work. The production on the album is very slick, the sound reproduction is crystal clear, and the musicality is top notch, dare I say too perfect, which leaves an impression of a manufactured sound. Notwithstanding this Duffmusiq is a very talented artist who, besides his own albums has written an instrumental called Bones which is licensed by Netflix to accompany a documentary called Norman's Rare Guitars and has composed and licensed tracks for Film and TV projects with major USA studios. This album highlights a different take on the blues with its modern clean sound and is very impressive

ADRIAN BLACKLEE

KEITH SCOTT BLUES

BACK TO STATE STREET

Independent



This album is a trip down memory lane for Keith Scott and some of the musicians on here. Some of the musos go right back to the beginning of Keith's career, hence the title. The list of the artists that they have played with over the years reads like a who's who of the Blues world: Albert Collins, Junior Wells, and Buddy Guy. Back To State Street has nine tracks, all written by The opening track, and the title track, is a gritty instrumental shuffle that gives you a little taste of what is to come. I have had the pleasure of knowing Keith Scott for several years; all of his albums come from the heart, the heart of the Blues. Not only is he an outstanding musician in his own right, but he's a brilliant songwriter to boot. Addiction is raw Blues, great lyrics that many of us can relate to, not necessarily through addiction, but certainly through life's struggles. One of the things that I admire about Keith Scott is the simplicity of his writing and playing, and his vocal delivery. I'm not saying that this is easy, far from it, what I am alluring to is the fact that he doesn't try to overcomplicate things. Big Dog is one of those songs that could have been written by the devil himself, raunchy, full of vigour and guitar licks straight from the bowels of Hell. If you want to know about Blues music, give this album a spin. Blues is not about guitar shredding or overdubs with lyrics that don't mean anything; the Blues is all about the feel, the understanding. Back To State Street has it all.

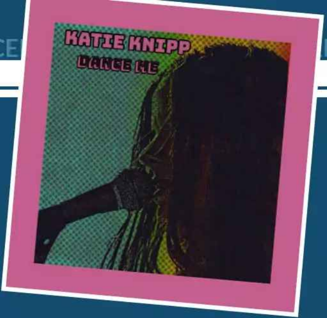
> ***Back To State Street has it all***

STEPHEN HARRISON

WATCH ON YOUTUBE

LISTEN ON SPOTIFY

VISIT THEIR WEBSITE



KATIE KNIPP

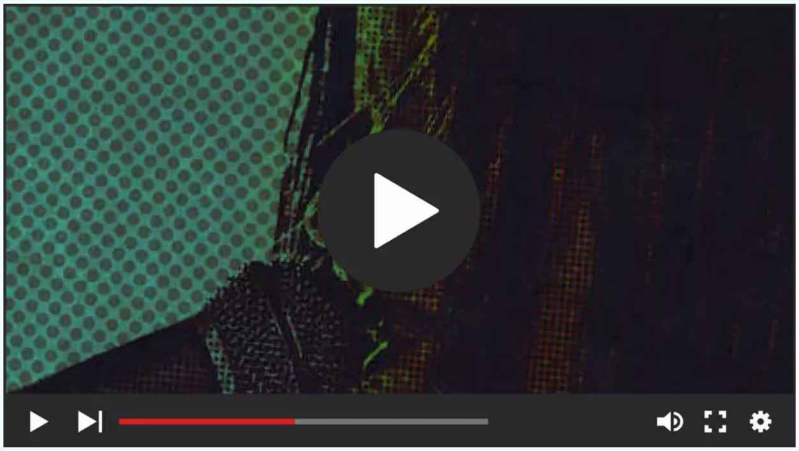
DANCE ME

Independent

On Dance Me, Katie Knipp takes a daring leap from her blues-rock roots into the shimmering, neon-inflected world of electronica and the result is a fascinating, genre-bending odyssey. The album finds Knipp collaborating with producer Pancho Tomaselli, who is credited with introducing a house, drum & bass, neo-soul and trip-hop framework to her work. From the opening track Vampire (The House Remix) Knipp's agile, assertive voice carries through a pulsing 4/4 beat, setting the tone for an album that refuses to settle into one lane. The track list includes stylistic detours into big beat techno on, Outlaw Doc, rock-reggae Stillness (The Rock-Reggae Remix), and metal Lava Pot (The Metal Remix). Lyrically, Knipp retains her signature emotional clarity; she writes with the same storytelling heart of her previous blues records, but now wrapped in synths, samples and re-imagined rhythms. What stands out is how Knipp doesn't lose her voice, or identity in the shuffle of genre-play. Her harmonica flits in and out, her piano and slide guitar roots peek around corners, and there's a clear continuity with the artist whose last release Me, established her as a multi-faceted storyteller. Stand-out moments include the neo-soul remix. I Want to Tell You, where her warm vocal tone floats over a sleek groove, and the trip-hop Time and Space, which offers a moody, expansive soundscape. That said, listeners anchored in traditional blues may find the transition challenging. The record asks you to meet it on its own terms, shimmering pads and drum-and-bass breakdowns rather than 12-bar progressions and classic boogie rhythms. But for those willing, Dance Me is an audacious, refreshingly unpredictable album; one that reaffirms Katie Knipp as an artist who refuses to be boxed in.

> *an audacious, refreshingly unpredictable album*

COLIN CAMPBELL



WATCH ON YOUTUBE

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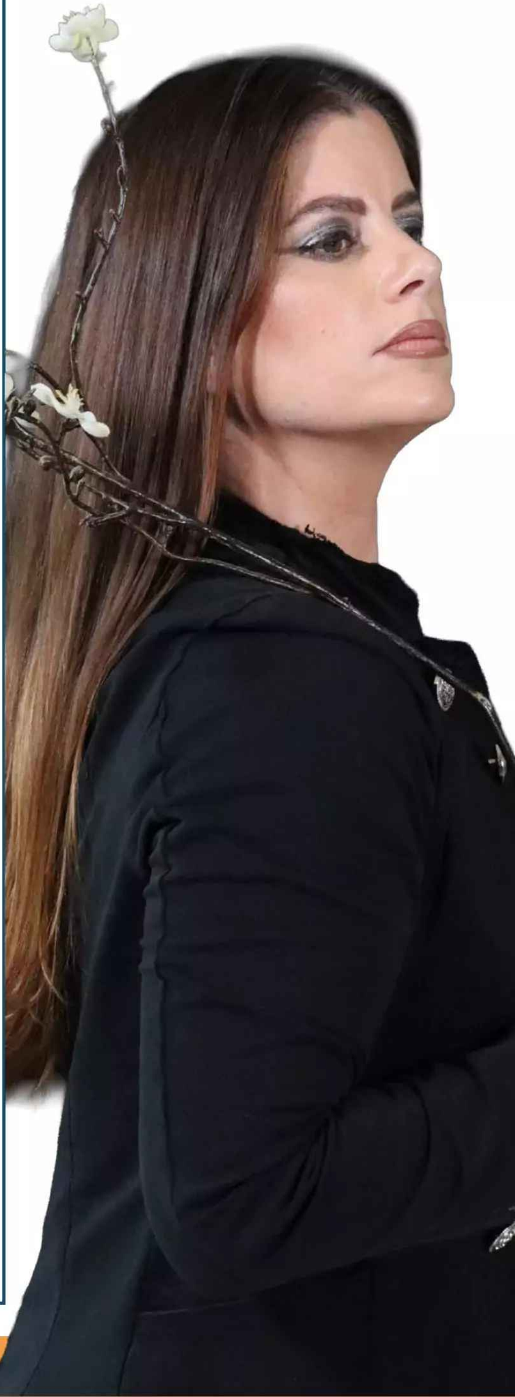
EARL THOMAS

LIVE IN LONDON

Earl Thomas Music

The singer Earl Thomas is joined by an incredibly good band and singing trio Sister Leola for a live set of rousing blues and gospel on Live in London. Recorded at Ronnie Scott's club in London the recording is technically very well recorded and gives some indication of how good this combination of musicians are. With backing from the six-piece Gospel Ambassadors, the sound is full, lively, and joyful. The opening



Strange Things Happening Every Day is a showcase for the singing of the Sister Leola Trio, with its swing jazz sound, and brass heavy salutations. Throughout the recording the groove provided by keyboards, drums, guitar and bass are muscular and straightforward, whilst the soloing is succinct and to the point, always in support of the groove and the feeling of the night. Earl Thomas opens things with Elijah Rock, with sinuous guitar lines aping the influence of 1970's Jeff Beck, slap bass and funk fusion, but it is one such songs as the Amazing Grace quoting, I'm Pressing On and the evergreen gospel staple of Glory Glory that show the pure tone of his voice. There are twelve tracks on this album, with a good range of sounds and styles. None of the songs out-stay their welcome and stick within a lose blues gospel style. It's Gonna Rain is a rousing gospel blues rocker, featuring the Sister Leola trio providing some fine backing vocals throughout. How I Got Over starts of as the slowest song here, but soon builds up a good head of steam, and has something of the classic Stax and Motown soul sound, particularly during the sanctified Hallelujah section. If you are a fan of classic soul, gospel and blues performed by musicians and singers who care deeply about music, Live in London would be a good addition to your album collection.

BEN MACNAIR

FACES

EARLY STEPS

Rhino Records

This re-release goes back to the very beginning of what was to become The Faces. Rod Stewart, Kenny Jones, Ronnie Lane, Ronnie Wood, and Ian McLagan quickly established themselves as the UK's No. 1 Blues and Rock Band. Early Steps was recorded at two separate venues. Side (1) was recorded at Olympic Studios in Barnes, with Side (2) being recorded at The Rolling Stones' warehouse in Bermondsey. The album consists of rough takes and previously unheard recordings. The rawness, for me, is what makes Earl Steps work; you can feel the energy within the room. There are two covers here, I Feel So Good (Big Bill Broonzy) and Evil (Willie Dixon), both of which are delivered almost perfectly. I've not come across an album that has been released like this before; all of the songs are labelled as rough mix or rehearsal. Apart from the two covers, Shake, Shudder, Shiver is one of the best songs that adorn this album. The band performed between 1969-1975, before Rod Stewart and Ronnie Wood went on to have solo success and band success with Ronnie joining The Rolling Stones. Who knows what this band could have achieved if they had stayed together, listening to Earl Steps in its rawest form, I think they would have gone on to dominate the world of Blues and Rock music for decades. If you want a piece of musical nostalgia, look no further than this masterpiece.

STEPHEN HARRISON

GRANT LYLE

AND NOW

Seismic Blues Music

Grant Lyle is a blues-rock, rock and soul styled guitarist, singer and bandleader out of Toronto, Canada who can rock out more than a little like Jimi Hendrix circa 1967 or be as mellow as Eric Clapton on 461 Ocean Boulevard on this, his eighth album. Take a listen to One Desire for the former, and especially the ballad We'll Carry On for the latter. The opening track, Won't Let You Go has a bluesy beat and some strong blues-rock wah wah guitar though it never takes over in the way that a heavier player might have tried to do – Grant is aware that his material is as much about the vocals as his playing, which is perhaps a good place to mention that eight of the nine tracks are Grant's own compositions – just one cover. Lose It opens a little like The Rolling Stones but quickly takes an individual, modern blues direction, and Grant can also inject a jazzy, funky flavour, late 70s or 80s style, as he does on Givin' Away. Asylum has a swampy, rootsy, sticky southern groove and there is some simple but effective blues harmonica by Roly Platt in the backing. The title track sounds like it could easily have come from Free's classic Fire And Water album – Grant's vocal has strong tinges of Paul Rodgers, and the overall feel of the song fits too. Mr. Lyle closes out this fine, intriguing and individual set – it is a real grower - with that aforementioned cover version, an updating of The Spencer Davis Group's 1966 soul styled hit Gimme Some Lovin' with a truly pounding beat and breathier vocals. It is a genuine re-working, and a very effective finale.

NORMAN DARWEN

HUDSPETH & TAYLOR

KIMUZIKI – LIVE IN DES MOINES

Hudtone Records

If you are a Blues music fan you will have seen hundreds of tired and limited talent musicians turning out to be the same old tired Blues 'classics'. Thankfully, Hudspeth & Taylor are not in that coterie. Instead, their first ever live album contains covers by classic Blues stars but not the bog-standard ones – and they deliver with the same spark and energy that the original musicians had. From Jimmy & Mary Reed's Going To New York to an exceptional cover of Willy Dixon's Spoonful, they manage to deliver something of the heart and soul of the original artists. The two form an unusual pairing – Jaisson Taylor on vocals and percussion while Brandon Hudspeth plays guitar. Taylor's vocals are rich and strong, his percussion subtle and featuring a number of differently toned Cajons. Hudspeth plays mainly acoustic guitars with resurrected ancient (70 plus years old) pickups and getting an authentic sound for tracks that go back as far as 100 years ago. They play a wide variety of forms and styles, not sticking to slavish representations of the songs, and keep the performance interesting and enlivening all the way through. The album was recorded live, although the musicians didn't know anything about it at the time, and the sound quality is excellent – coming straight off the mixing desk. It is an exceptional album and a brilliant example of how these old numbers cand be played if the musicians have enough real talent and will.

ANDY SNIPPER

HUMBLE PIE
AS SAFE AS YESTERDAY

Immediate Records

In the mid to late 60s in the UK, there was a surge of young up-and-coming Rock bands that contained just a few people. The Herd, The Small Faces, The Faces, and Humble Pie. Humble Pie was formed by Steve Marriott and his good friend from The Herd, Peter Frampton. Steve Marriott had tried to recruit Frampton into The Small Faces, but was met with stern opposition, good news for Humble Pie. As Safe As Yesterday is the debut album for the band, with Frampton and Marriott taking the lead on vocals and with songwriting duties as well. Desperation kicks off side one of this vinyl re-release with plenty of attention on the guitar playing of Frampton and Marriott. Buttermilk Boy rather puts me in mind of The Who's Quadrophenia; obviously, this was many years before The Who had even thought about that concept. Natural Born Boogie does exactly what it says on the tin. Boogie, Blues, and Rock 'n' Roll, what more could you possibly ask for in a song from the 60's? Alabama 69 sees Country and Bluegrass combine way before anyone really knew what Bluegrass was all about. You can almost taste the moonshine and cornbread. It's a breath of fresh air to get the chance to revisit an album of such class as this. As with the four bands that I mentioned at the beginning, no one knows what these bands could have gone on to achieve had fate not lent a hand in personnel decisions. Some of the finest Blues, Rock, and Boogie came out ot these bands, and they inspired a new generation of musicians. As Safe As Yesterday is a testament to that.

STEPHEN HARRISON

JAN AKKERMAN
MY FOCUS-LIVE UNDER THE RAINBOW

Artone/Music Theories

With his former musical comrade, Thijs Van Leer, forging ahead as the remaining original member, releasing new music and playing live under the Focus banner, guitar maestro Akkerman has busied himself by focusing on his solo releases and live shows. Recorded during his February 2025 tour, he has wasted no time in releasing this live album of Focus and solo instrumentals. The most famous of which remains the graceful Sylvia. Titled My Focus, the musical divorce between the two Dutch musical masters cannot

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PODCAST

Listen to some amazing interviews with the artists we've been lucky enough to speak to for the magazine. **NOW ON YOUTUBE!**

LEILANI KILGORE

Nashville-based guitarist and singer Leilani Kilgore joins Blues Matters' Colin Campbell to talk about her debut album, her journey from blues prodigy to fiery rock artist, and more...

HAYES CARLL

Blues Matters sits down with Nashville-based singer songwriter Hayes Carll to talk origins, craft, and his deeply personal new album We're Only Human.

KINGFISH

Join Stephen Harrison from Blues Matters Magazine as he chats with Grammy-winning blues sensation Christone "Kingfish" Ingram.

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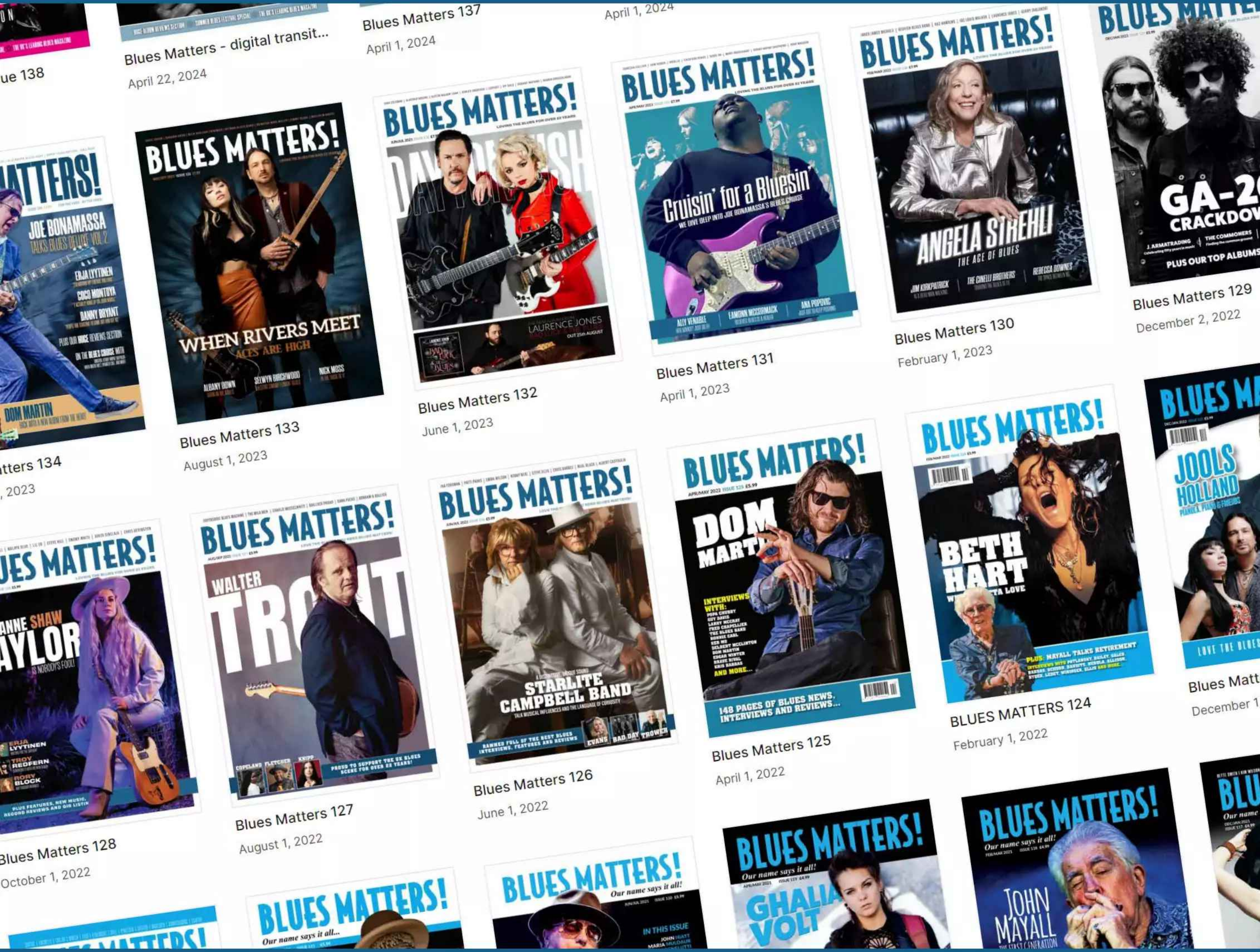
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be more obvious. With his fellow musicians subservient to his guitar-led interpretations of classic Focus tunes, Akkerman's six-string wizardry casts a domineering spell that, at times, cries out for a contrasting musical ace to duel with. Coen Molenaar acquits himself well on keyboards, but it's the vocal keyboard interplay with Akkerman that is the big missing piece in these wide-screen compositions. Nevertheless, Focus 2 and 1, Palace Of The King, and Hocus Pocus remain a glorious musical wall of death event to experience. His technique and tone still stand out, and it's clear why Akkerman has influenced many guitarists and impressed the likes of Ritchie Blackmore along the way. He continues to do just that on this live release.

PAUL DAVIES

JJ GREY & MOFRO

ORANGE BLOSSOMS

Alligator Records

When Orange Blossoms first dropped in 2008, JJ Grey & Mofro delivered a record steeped in Southern soul, swampy groove, and hard-earned storytelling. Now, more than 15 years later, the album is getting a well-deserved revival through a freshly remastered reissue, reminding listeners why it became a modern roots classic. For longtime fans, this glorious album marked a turning point. It saw the band sliding deeper into funk, stacking the horns higher, and sharpening Grey's lyrical reflections on love, loss, and life in his native Florida. The title track still hits with humid, slow-burn swagger, while Everything Good Is Bad and Wyoming showcase Grey's uncanny ability to blend blue-collar confession with smooth, gospel-soaked delivery. This reissue doesn't simply polish the sound; it lets the grooves breathe, giving new weight to Mofro's rhythm section and texture to the album's signature vintage-soul production. The remaster feels warmer, richer, and more alive; like the record always wanted to sound on vinyl. What makes Orange Blossoms endure is its emotional honesty. Grey isn't just singing; he's testifying when he delivers the lyrics, about past mistakes, fading memories, and moments that still sting. The re-release arrives at a moment when roots music is seeing a resurgence, and Orange Blossoms stands as a reminder that authenticity never goes out of style. Whether rediscovered or heard for the first time, this album looms all over again, still tender, still gritty, still unmistakably JJ Grey an album to savour.

COLIN CAMPBELL

JOHN BRENNAN

BRING IT ON BACK TO ME

Guitar One Records

With his new ten track release, John Brennan stakes a firm claim in the realm of no¬-frills, straight-ahead blues-rock. His reverence for the genre's roots is clear: from the slide-inflected stomping opener, Junkyard Blues to the raw live take of Muddy Waters'¬s Baby Please Don't Go, Brennan isn't flirting with the blues, he's diving in. The album is a delightful mix of classic covers, live cuts and originals that stay faithful to its influences rather than chasing modern gloss. Brennan both honours tradition and stamps on his own voice. His five originals sit comfortably alongside the covers; Ain't Gonna Cry For You No More, delivers a driving rhythm, slide guitar and a vocal full of grit, while a reinterpretation of Elmore James', It Hurts Me Too shows Brennan at ease in the territory of classic tone and mood. The production is lean and live feeling; several tracks recorded in Brennan's home studio, others captured onstage, giving the album a visceral edge of authenticity. While traditionalists will appreciate the fidelity to blues lineage, listeners seeking sweeping innovation may find the album's wheel-reinvention minimal. This is not a flaw by any means here; this is the whole point of the release. In short John Brennan's newest release doesn't aim to chart new territory, it aims to go back and reclaim it and thus try and keep the blues genre relevant. For anyone who loves their blues with punch, slide, authenticity and a bit of rock & roll swing, this one hits its mark.

COLIN CAMPBELL

JOSH FORTENBERY

TIDY MEMORIAL

Muskeg Collective

A new name to me, singer, guitarist and songwriter Josh Fortenbury is based in Juneau, Alaska and this is perhaps apparent on the track Groundhog. It opens with some delicately finger-picked guitar – shades of Mississippi John Hurt - before the pedal steel comes in, creating an impression of below-zero temperatures and a wide-open expansive atmosphere – or is that just my imagination? He follows it up with Poppy's Waltz, a very traditional sounding country piece with fine fiddle playing, dedicated to his father, a veteran of the Second World War who experienced discrimination on his return to Birmingham, Alabama because he was Jewish. Steven is a song about a homeless man shot and killed by police. So yes, this is a country-tinted Americana album (Erik Clampitt's pedal steel guitar is a major instrumental voice) but as noted, the songs contain themes not far removed from the blues, and Josh's vocal delivery in particular sounds steeped in southern heritage. Is It Me? is another track with a vintage country sound, it almost sounds like it should have come down from high in the Appalachians – nice fiddle again too, by Andrew Heist, whose harmony vocals also add greatly to the old-timey sound. The title track has all the trappings of country music (some of it reaching way back) but is perhaps a little more pop oriented than the other songs here. But if you are looking for authentic sounding Americana with a rootsy, country tinge, then this album will most certainly be the kind of thing you want to hear.

NORMAN DARWEN

KB BAYLEY

EAST SIDE CONFESSIONS

Independent

Pour yourself a glass, pull up a chair, KB Bayley has stories to tell. East Side Confessions, the Geordie lap-steel player's third album, contains multiple gems and pearls of wisdom. The title track commences with his father's words – 'we were born on the East side ... where we'll die'. KB caressing the strings, his vocal soft, subtle and calming, wise words flow like liquor into your glass. Aided by exquisite female backing vocals KB paints a picture of his life telling 'the hundred million things I got wrong' as 'the seagulls cry for lives they never knew' – an example of the multiple finely crafted lyrical gems awaiting discovery within this album. The Light Through The Trees continues to paint vivid images as 'the promise of an outstretched hand' takes us on a journey embellished by layer upon layer of guitar. KB's lap-steel wizardry in unison with a breathtaking Alfie Reeves solo. The Korgis hit Everybody's Got To Learn Sometime is stripped of its 80's synth overload as KB and Jonny Martin concoct an intoxicating blend of guitar flavours. Sarah Carter's backing vocal adds mystique to this modern makeover. Upbeat, pacey, western styled Don't Let The Rain Fall On My Face sees a condemned man begging for forgiveness as 'dusty men in pinstripe polish the hearse' whilst a heavenly refrain introduces Until Today – a beautiful tribute written too late for the subject to hear in person. Gavin Thomas' harmonica duets with KB throughout the atmospheric Somewhere East Of Moscow, subtle banjo can be heard as our dreams get lost and 'eaten by a bear'. Listen intently to The Flowers Outside The Church - crammed full of quality lyrical anecdotes amongst the haunting harmonica/guitar refrains. An authentic cover of Gretchen Peters' Love & Texaco is a showcase for KB's talents whilst the bluegrass classic White House Blues sees Charlie Jonas Walter banjo and KB's guitar dancing together as the tragic tale of President McKinley's assassination unfolds. Just one man, his voice and his guitar - Patty Griffin's That Kind Of Lonely ends our album fittingly. A lyrical and musical genius.

TAF ROCK

KIM WILSON
SLOW BURN

M.C. Records

Kim Wilson has never been the kind of artist to hurry the blues, and his new album, Slow Burn, is proof that this music is at its most powerful when allowed to breathe, linger, and reveal itself. Culled from previously unreleased studio sessions recorded in 2014 and 2020, the record feels like a preserved moment in time; raw, emotional, and untouched by trends or urgency. It's a reminder that Wilson, long celebrated as the voice and harmonica force behind The Fabulous Thunderbirds, remains one of the genre's most authentic carriers. Wilson uses the songs to reconnect with the roots that shaped him. His interpretations of songs by B.B. King, Howlin' Wolf, Robert Nighthawk, and Sonny Boy Williamson II are steeped in respect, but never weighed down by imitation. He plays and sings with the confidence of someone who has lived inside this music for decades every bend, growl, and breath feels personal. The biggest surprise is the strength of Wilson's four original songs. They don't just complement the classics; they sound like they've always belonged beside them. Gritty, emotionally direct, and shaped by the same blues traditions he honours throughout, they show that Wilson isn't merely curating history; he's still actively contributing to it. The album marks the final studio recordings of three musicians who were not only longtime collaborators, but close friends: drummer Richard Innes, pianist Barrelhouse Chuck, and bassist Larry Taylor of Canned Heat. Their presence gives Slow Burn a quiet, reverent depth. This isn't just a blues session; it's a living memorial. The production keeps everything honest: no gloss, no digital shine, just musicians locked into a shared pulse. A few upbeat shuffles spark the energy, but the album's truest power lies in its unhurried, soul-deep slow tracks. Kim Wilson here, is doing exactly what he's always done: keeping the blues real, unforced, and full of heart. For veterans of his music, it's essential. For anyone seeking to understand the spirit of the blues, it's a masterclass in feel over flash.

COLIN CAMPBELL

LETTUCE
COOK

Independent

Lettuce returns with Cook, serving up a funk-heavy banquet that's as tight as ever yet full of fresh flavours. From the first gritty groove of Gold Tooth, the band flexes the precision that's made them one of the most revered rhythm machines in modern funk. Adam Deitch's razor-sharp drumming snaps into place with Adam Smirnoff's slick guitar lines, while Nigel Hall's keys and honeyed vocals weave through the brass firepower of Eric "Benny" Bloom and Ryan Zoidis. It's classic Lettuce; lean, locked-in, and irresistibly rhythmic, but this time, the recipe has evolved.

Cook doesn't just stay in the pocket; it opens it up. The band pushes further into layered arrangements and bold production choices, adding new textures without losing their signature punch. Their reimagining of Keni Burke's Rising to the Top, is a highlight, honouring the original's smooth soul while injecting it with Lettuce's swagger and Hall's smoky delivery. The album's food metaphor isn't just clever branding it's structural. Lettuce treats each track like a course, crafted with intention and balance. "Music and food are very related," says Deitch. "Use the wrong ingredients in either and you ruin the sound, and the meal." That ethos is audible in the title track, where every instrument is placed with a chef's precision, allowing the groove to simmer and settle into its own flavour. Cook plays like a carefully curated tasting menu; satisfying for longtime fans yet spiced with new ideas that show the band still expanding its palate. Funk lovers, soul seekers, and groove chasers will all find something to sink their teeth into. Lettuce hasn't just released a record they've plated a full-course experience, and the invitation stands; come hungry.

COLIN CAMPBELL

MARCUS DEML

PURE

Triple Coil Music

Marcus Deml has a long and fascinating history. From his roots in Prague, then Salzburg, Munich, Ludwigshafen and Frankfurt and finally to LA, where he studied (and taught) at the Guitar Institute of Technology alongside such luminaries as Larry Carlton, Scott Henderson and Paul Gilbert. He has been in many bands across the genres, including Earth Nation, Electric Outlet and The Blue Poets and worked as a sessioneer on dozens of projects. Now, this is not a Blues album, but it does contain some Blues style music in and among nine tracks that speak as someone expressing the ideas and feelings through their music. He also has a lot of fun writing and playing in different genres. Tracks such as Only Half A Step using a hip hop rhythm behind a jaunty guitar line, or Budapest where his guitar takes you around a city that he grew to love – the architecture, the people, the atmosphere – in a day of wandering before he performed a concert. My favourite track is Persecucion which he describes as the soundtrack to a chase, without the film – it sounds pretentious but it really works. I don't think that comparisons are valid, but his playing would strike a chord with lovers of Gary Moore or David Gilmour or maybe Al Di Meola. His technique is flawless, but he also manages to get real soul and emotion into his playing. It isn't an album I expected to enjoy but he has a remarkable talent, no little intelligence and the music has real depth. This feels like music from the heart as well as the head. A very intense album, and one that really stuck a chord with this reviewer.

ANDY SNIPPER

MARK CAMERON

BLUES FACTORY

Overton Music / Blind Racoon

Never been to Minnesota myself but one thing is for certain and that is as a State it produces a lot of music in many different genres. Too prove the point, and most certainly right in our beloved Blues territory along comes Mark, and his fellow band mates, with an album which, whilst not really breaking much in the way of new ground, there is much to enjoy within the grooves. Can we still say grooves in these days of digital downloads and CDs? I don't really know or care as grooves sit well with me! So the album opens with The Wrong Thing which kind of shuffles along with fine guitar licks and harmonica interplay. Too Hot To Boogie drips with the metaphor of a car overheating and with a couple not able to get it on due to the hot summer weather. I really like Drink On The Job with its spoken lyrics reminding me of Dave Alvin's brilliant version of Highway 61 Revisited. Clever idea well realised with its harp, guitar and sax work! Sugar has a feel straight from Memphis Stax or Muscle Shoals studios with strident horns powering the cut along. Back to solid slow Blues territory with Change Your Ways whilst Below The Bottom which rounds off the album explores the idea of the worst that you think can happen is actually even further down than to expected. The album's title track is interesting in that it features the very non-blues flute in key parts of the song alongside some tasty slide on a resonator guitar. Nice! So a very competent and entertaining outing throughout if a tad un-adventurous.

GRAEME SCOTT

NICHOLAS DAVID

MORE THAN MUSIC

Independent

Nicholas David's new release is a deeply soulful and introspective statement that resonates far beyond its comforting grooves. The title is entirely apt; this isn't just a collection of songs, but a journey through life, loss, reflection and hope. Musically, the album is anchored by David's rich, lived-in baritone and his keyboard roots, but it draws in touches of gospel, country-soul and Americana in a way that feels both authentic and open-hearted. Tracks like One To Run combine a low-slung Americana melody with gospel inflections, while Cool, Calm, Crazy brings a blues-tinged organ passion. The centrepiece United; stands out spare yet emotionally potent, it captures longing and vulnerability without ever veering into melodrama. Lyrically, the album walks the line between pain and perseverance. David channels personal grief, the loss of his grandmother, his guitarist's loss of his father and turns it into something softly optimistic rather than resigned. What makes it compelling is the sincerity: rather than hiding behind genre tropes, the songs feel like honest portraits of the human condition.If there is a reservation, it's that the record stays comfortably within its lyrical and sonic zone. So, those seeking radical departures or genre-shaking experiments might find it a little safe. But for what it sets out to do, it succeeds; More Than Music is a moving, cohesive album that invites you to feel, reflect and simply listen. In a world of over-produced flash, Nicholas David gives us something genuinely grounded and real.

COLIN CAMPBELL

SEAN TAYLOR

FIRST LIGHT

SEAN TAYLOR SONGS / ANOTHER PLANET MUSIC

Very long experience of listening to new albums, as an amateur and professional, has taught me that you should never listen to the first track, and assume that it sets the tone and feel of the whole album waiting behind it. Because the lush orchestration of First Light gives no hint whatsoever of the slinky sinuous acoustic guitar / piano-based excellence of Artificial Intelligence, which follows on right after it. Mr Taylor has been nominated for the UK Blues Acoustic Artist Of The Year for the last three years consecutively, and on the basis of this collection, it's not at all hard to see why. Artificial Intelligence is carefully layered blues with electric piano, bass and drums, and Sean Taylor's highly distinctive voice gently but accurately spearing the nonsense of television talent shows, encompassing similarly vacuous mass appeal TV schlock. The beautifully restrained electric guitar solo shows that Sean wears his musicianship lightly, always just enough for the song, nothing else needed. The real savage attack on the current White House incumbent, delivered in a whispering knowing style, is a swing-style political rallying cry, even more powerful for its vintage arrangement around its utterly current analysis of political attitudes. The approach continues in Seeds, a genuine protest song for the modern era. But Sean Taylor is not a bitter politico, he also has heartfelt love songs like Everything to balance some positivity into the material. It's interesting how versatile his voice is on this album – wistful and soulful after being scathing and angry, and the vocal works equally well on both styles, always a useful attribute for any musician who wants to ensure that he offers a rounded and mature view of the world around him. The track, Poverty, nails the underclass experience of the UK disadvantaged under a jaunty jazzy arrangement. It's not a new way of presenting a dark message over a cheerful backing, but it's still hugely effective in Sean Taylor's hands. The penultimate flourish is Dylan's All Along The Watchtower, given the unique Sean Taylor stamp with a sparse arrangement, allowing the majestic words to shine through. All round, a wonderful collection of thoughtful words and clever music – that's really all you need.

ANDY HUGHES

STEVE HOWELL & FATS KAPLIN

KNOW YOU FROM OLD

OUT OF THE PAST MUSIC

We are purist by nature here at BM Towers, we tend to favour originals over interpretations, the real deal rather than the homage, however respectfully intentioned it may be. The phrase 'Tribute Band' gives your scribe hives, because piggybacking on someone else's talent is no 'tribute' whatsoever. But there are exceptions to every rule. When talented musicians can offer modern interpretations of valuable Americana songs that would otherwise be lost to history, then they are more than welcome on my sound system. That's why Know You Fron Old by Steve Howell and Fats Kaplin is not a pale imitation 'tribute', it's a pair of time-served seasoned musicians playing the songs that have influenced not only themselves, but generations of musicians before them, keeping the flame of story-telling through heartfelt lyrics and peerless musicianship. This collection is a genuine effort to bring these gems to a new generation of listeners who can hear the humour, the danger, the tragedy, and the simple joy of telling a tale in these wonderful songs which deserve to be heard and enjoyed once again. Standout tracks are the warning saga of Buffalo Skinners, the simple folky tale of Blue Ridge Mountain Blues, and Cold Haily Windy Night, all of which completely evoke the places and times when the songs were conceived by musicians who lived short hard lives, and wanted to leave something of their experiences when they were gone. The musical accompaniment's lightness of touch belies the decades of dedicated skill that has allowed Messrs. Howell and Kaplan to grace these songs with their authentic and respectful backing. The atmospheres of these songs would fall flat in less experienced hands, and it's true to say that songs that deserve to stand the test of time, as these do, should only be attempted by musicians who can do them justice. The combination of appropriate artists rendering genuine American folk history in songs makes this a wonderful album for anyone who appreciates where modern music comes from.

ANDY HUGHES

TERRY ROBB

HOWLIN' WATERS

New Folk

Well now this album is somewhat different from the normal run of releases as I think it would be really fair to describe it as fundamentally an instrumental album with occasional vocal cuts as well. St Charles Rag, Alleluia Shuffle And Back Door Mirror set the tone as they feature only the superb finger picking of Terry. Not another instrument to be heard until track 4s One Way Train To Sorrow. I can only guess that the vocals are also down to Terry as this arrived with no packaging just a simple dust slipcover. That is a pity, as I should like to know. For certain I am not an expert however I believe I am correct in thinking there are no Wolf or Muddy covers to be heard within these tunes. Likely all are self-penned, and Terry has a very fine fluid playing style with licks covering many styles but those deeply rooted in the Blues, Ragtime with Jazz flourishes are well to the fore. I had to hit that well known information site to come up with the fact that Terry is Canadian and has released at least a whopping 20 plus solo albums and appeared on dozens of other artist's works. The album closes out with the instrumental Fahey At Bush Park, which is a nod to John Fahey, another fine picker. A fine album but should you seek it out I hope it comes with much more in the way of information and appropriate packaging.

GRAEME SCOTT

THE BLUES PROJECT

LIVE 2025

Globe Records

This album release keeps the flag flying for the Blues Project sixty years after they first formed. While there is only drummer Roy Blumenfield left from the original line up the band are continuing the flavour and spirit of the 1960's Blues Project band with an eclectic mix of music rooted in the Blues. These are Live recordings but are of studio quality which is not surprising given the quality of the musicians in the current line-up. All the band member's share lead vocals across the thirteen tracks although Roy Blumenfield and Keyboardist Ken

Clark are the main vocalists with four tracks each. The material mixes some historic songs written by Al Kooper with more recent songs; the forementioned Al's song Flute Thing is a superb instrumental track which allows all the band members to flex their muscles with some improvisational playing. Special mentiongoes to Ken Clark who plays an EWI Flute, the twin guitarists David Aguiliar and Mark Newman showcase their skills, particularly on Evolution which is a standout track with some scintillating guitar solos and a melancholy vocal by Ray. One of the more direct Blues songs is Tulsa, co-written by Mark Newman which tells the story of the Tulsa Race Massacre of 1921, very harrowing but beautifully performed. The album closes with another original song from the 1966 album Projections called Wake Me Shake Me which is a type of "freakout" song driven by wailing Guitar and Keyboards. The Blues Project were and still are a great band who created a unique sound from mixing Folk, Blues, Jazz and R&B into their music, which was further enhanced by their improvisational skills. An album to treasure and one that brings back happy memories from my youth, nostalgic but with a modern twist.

ADRIAN BLACKLEE

THE ORIGINAL BLUES PROJECT

REUNION IN CENTRAL PARK

Floating World

The Blues Project were one of the progenitors of Blues Rock, existing for a scant few years before breaking up – the members going on to form Blood Sweat & Tears and Seatrain. The most notable member of the original band was Al Kooper and he, along with Danny Kalb, Steve Katz, Roy Blumenfeld & Andy Kulberg, produced three albums on Verve (an MGM imprint) in the mid-sixties. They reformed in '72 and this captures their appearance at the 6th Annual Schaefer Music Festival in Central Park NY in '73 (although the liner notes point out that recordings are actually from a Washington DC gig a few days previously as the Central Park gig was not the best). It is a superb listen for anyone who enjoys the music of the mid-sixties, they encompass Blues, folk, jazz and even some classical elements in their repertoire. The tracks include some originals – mainly written by Kooper – as well as a superb version of Donovan's Catch The Wind, Muddy Waters Louisiana Blues & Two Trains Running, Jimmy Reed's Caress Me Baby and even a Chuck Berry number, You Can't Catch Me. Kooper's organ and other keys is ever-present, either filling the sound out or taking lead on a few numbers and Danny Kalb's lead guitar and solos are superb. There is a really dynamic sound to the Blues Project, real punch to the rhythm section and Kalb & Katz vocals really part of the number. The pacing is fine too and the recording quality is excellent. All around, it is a terrific listen, especially if you are into the West Coast type sound.

ANDY SNIPPER

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THE BIG BLUES CHART

THE TOP 50 BLUES ALBUMS

POS	ARTIST	ALBUM	LABEL
#1	BUDDY GUY	AIN’T DONE WITH THE BLUES	SILVERTONE
#2	ROOMFUL OF BLUES	STEPPIN’ OUT	ALLIGATOR RECORDS
#3	MUD MORGANFIELD	DEEP MUD	NOLA BLUE
#4	BILLY BRANCH & THE SONS OF BLUES	THE BLUES IS MY BIOGRAPHY	ROSA’S LOUNGE RECORDS
#5	ROBBIN KAPSALIS	THE BLUES IS IN THE HOUSE	BLUES HOUSE PRODUCTIONS
#6	MIKE ZITO & ALBERT CASTIGLIA	HELP YOURSELF	GULF COAST RECORDS
#7	TOM HAMBRIDGE	DOWN THE HATCH	QUARTO VALLEY RECORDS
#8	CHRISTONE “KINGFISH” INGRAM	HARD ROAD	RED ZERO RECORDS
#9	CANDICE IVORY	NEW SOUTHERN VINTAGE	NOLA BLUE RECORDS
#10	JOHNNIE JOHNSON	I’M JUST JOHNNIE	MISSOURI MORNING
#11	BOB CORRITORE & FRIENDS	EARLY BLUES SESSIONS	VIZZTONE LABEL GROUP
#12	PIPER AND THE HARD TIMES	GOOD COMPANY	HARD TIMES RECORDS
#13	KIRK FLETCHER	KEEP ON PUSHING	VIZZTONE
#14	DEVON ALLMAN	THE BLUES SUMMIT	RUF RECORDS
#15	D.K. HARRELL	TALKIN’ HEAVY	ALLIGATOR
#16	MONSTER MIKE WELCH	KEEP LIVING TIL I DIE	S R
#17	YATES MCKENDREE	NEED TO KNOW	QUALIFIED RECORDS
#18	THE LUCKY LOSERS	ARRIVAL	MOMOJO RECORDS
#19	RORY BLOCK	HEAVY ON THE BLUES	M.C. RECORDS
#20	DAVE KEYES	TWO TRAINS	MOMOJO RECORDS
#21	AL BASILE	BLUES IN HAND	SWEETSPOT RECORDS
#22	MISSISSIPPI HEAT	DON’T LOOK BACK	DELMARK RECORDS
#23	CHARLIE MUSSELWHITE	LOOK OUT HIGHWAY	FORTY BELOW RECORDS
#24	MARIA MULDAUR	ONE HOUR MAMA: THE BLUES OF VICTORIA SPIVEY	NOLA BLUE RECORDS
#25	CHAMBERS DESLAURIERS	OUR TIME TO RIDE	FORTY BELOW RECORDS
#26	TAJ MAHAL & KEB’ MO’	ROOM ON THE PORCH	CONCORD
#27	LARRY MCCRAY	HEARTBREAK CITY	KTBA RECORDS
#28	VARIOUS ARTISTS	JACKTOWN USA	MIJA RECORDS
#29	BONESHAKERS	LIVE TO BE THIS	GULF COAST
#30	KENT BURNSIDE	HILL COUNTRY BLOOD	STROLLING BONES
#31	ERIN HARPE FEAT. JIM COUNTRYMAN	LET THE MERMAIDS FLIRT WITH ME	VIZZTONE LABEL GROUP
#32	JOE BONAMASSA & FRIENDS	BB KINGS BLUES SUMMIT 100	KEEPING THE BLUES ALIVE
#33	BOBBY RUSH & KENNY WAYNE SHEPHERD	YOUNG FASHIONED WAYS	DEEP RUSH
#34	TEDESCHI TRUCKS BAND & LEON RUSSELL	MAD DOGS & ENGLISHMEN REVISIT	
#35	JIMMY BURNS & SOUL MESSAGE BAND	FULL CIRCLE	DELMARK RECORDS
#36	BB & THE BULLETS	HIGH TIDE	DIXIEFROG RECORDS
#37	ANA POPOVIC	DANCE TO THE RYTHM	ELECTRIC HEEL RECORDS
#38	MANU LANVIN	MAN ON A MISSION	GEL PRODUCTION
#39	MIKE BOURNE BAND	KANSAS CITY O’CLOCK	OVERTON MUSIC
#40	MISSISSIPPI MACDONALD	SLIM PICKIN’	APM RECORDS
#41	ANGELIQUE FRANCIS	NOT DEFEATED	INDIE
#42	VARIOUS ARTISTS	ANTONE’S 50TH ALLSTARS	ANTONE’S RECORDS
#43	SAMANTHA FISH	PAPER DOLL	ROUNDER
#44	GA-20	ORPHANS	COLEMINE PRODUCTIONS
#45	GARRY BURNSIDE	IT’S MY TIME NOW	STROLLING BONES RECORDS
#46	SOUTHERN AVENUE	FAMILY	ALLIGATOR RECORDS
#47	MARK CAMERON	BLUES FACTORY	OVERTON MUSIC
#48	MIKE HENDERSON	LAST NIGHT AT THE BLUEBIRD	QUALIFIED
#49	TOMMY CASTRO & THE PAINKILLERS	CLOSER TO THE BONE	ALLIGATOR RECORDS
#50	SHIRLEY JOHNSON	SELFISH KIND OF GAL	DELMARK RECORDS

IBBA TOP 40

INDEPENDENT BLUES BROADCASTERS ASSOCIATION

bluesbroadcasters.co.uk

Position	Artist	Album
1	BURNING ROPE	BURNING ROPE
2	ZOE SCHWARZ ROB KORAL & FRIENDS	COLOURFUL HOUSE
3	BISON HIP	EVERYTHING THAT CAME BEFORE WAS JUST LEADING UP TO THIS
4	ROOMFUL OF BLUES	STEPPIN' OUT!
5	PIERRE LACOCQUE'S MISSISSIPPI HEAT	DON'T LOOK BACK
6	HUBERT DORIGATTI & THE BLUES HARP MASTERS	POOR BOY
7	JOE BONAMASSA	B.B. KING'S BLUES SUMMIT 100 VOL. I
8	KARA GRAINGER	THAT'S HOW I GOT TO MEMPHIS
9	ROBERT KANE	BLUES IS BLUES
10	DAVE WELD & THE IMPERIAL FLAMES	BLUESIN' THROUGH THE YEARS
11	BOB CORRITORE & FRIENDS	EARLY BLUES SESSIONS
12	MUD MORGANFIELD	DEEP MUD
13	BUDDY GUY	AIN'T DONE WITH THE BLUES
14	MANU LANVIN	MAN ON A MISSION
15	MUDLOW	RUN THRU THE COVER CROP
16	ROBBIN KAPSALIS	THE BLUES IS IN THE HOUSE
17	TOM HAMBRIDGE	DOWN THE HATCH
18	HOLLOW SOULS	HOLLOW SOULS
19	WHEN RIVERS MEET	SAVING GRACE
20	WALTER TROUT	SIGN OF THE TIMES
21	THE ZAC SCHULZE GANG	STRAIGHT TO IT
22	BILLY BRANCH & THE SONS OF BLUES	THE BLUES IS MY BIOGRAPHY
23	DOUG MACLEOD	BETWEEN SOMEWHERE & GOODBYE
24	MARK CAMERON	BLUES FACTORY
25	WAILIN' WALKER	BLUES LIGHTNIN'
26	BLOOD BROTHERS	HELP YOURSELF
27	BIG WOLF BAND	LIVE AT JOE JOE JIM'S
28	SHIRLEY JOHNSON	SELFISH KIND OF GAL
29	MISSISSIPPI MACDONALD	SLIM PICKIN'
30	ANA POPOVIC	DANCE TO THE RHYTHM
31	RANDY LEE RIVIERE	FARMHAND BLUES
32	MARY STOKES BAND	HOMETOWN BLUES
33	KIRK FLETCHER	KEEP ON PUSHING
34	JON HINES	MEMPHIS SUN
35	GA-20	ORPHANS
36	LAURA EVANS	OUT OF THE DARK
37	BYWATER CALL	SUNSHINE, LIVE 2024
38	BEN HEMMING	THE MEANING OF ALL THINGS
39	MIKE DANGEROUX	15 SHADES OF BLUE
40	KB BAYLEY	EAST SIDE CONFESSIONS

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Mick McConnell & Blue Thunder	Malcolm Bruce Blues Band	Greig Taylor Band
Jack Austin Despy	Mississippi MacDonald Band	61 Ghosts
	Neil Sadler Band	Liz Jones & Broken Windows
	Tom Davies & The Bluebirds	The Fargo Railroad Co
	Brian Rawson Band	Ceri Justice & The Jury
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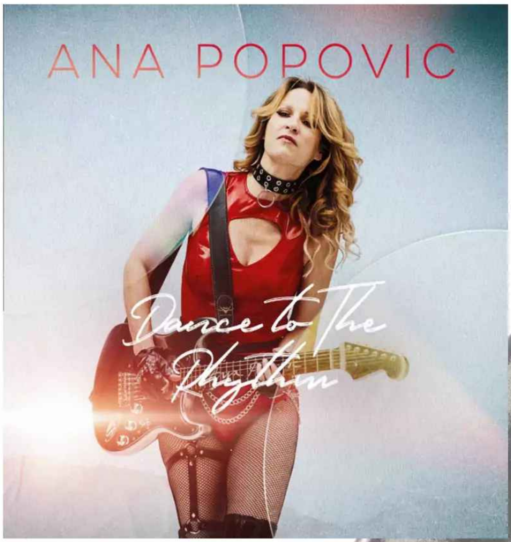
Ana Popovic

Dance To The Rhythm

Digital release date Sept 26. 2025.
Physical street date Oct. 30. 2025.
UPC 8600140758



Ana Popovic and 'Electric Heel Records' are thrilled to announce the release of Ana's 13th studio album "Dance To The Rhythm" that blends searing blues style with elements of rock, R&B, soul and funk to create a unique sound that is intriguing and powerful, unpredictable and new but unmistakably her very own.

For Ana Popovic, the operative word is "empowerment." . Popovic's focus is dialed in on life, love, and, of course, loads of sinfully toned guitar via her beloved Fender Strat. Dance to the Rhythm is a mission statement for the masses, alerting her faithful fans that the six-stringer is back—with a bullet.

The record, which merges the soulful bliss of '70s funk and R&B with Popovic's rare brand of fearless modern blues, is a barnburner.

But Dance to the Rhythm has its sultry, late-night chill-out moments, like the blues track "Dwell on the Feeling," which merges Popovic's torrid guitar licks with her sweet-toned, idiosyncratic, yet commanding vocals.

Popovic remains an inventive modern-day maestro. Listen to the unbridled energy and subtle nuances throughout 'Dance to the Rhythm,' and enjoy an eye-opening, ear-expanding experience. Take the journey.

ANA POPOVIC
Dance to The Rhythm

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